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ABSTRACT

This collection of essays on early French second language instruction includes: "Why Bilingualism?" (Steven MacKinnon); "French Second-Language Programs: Alternative Approaches" (Henry P. Edwards); "Core French: A Brighter Future" (Janet Poyen, Judy Gibson); "The Parents' Role" (Deborah Whale); "Franco Fun" (Elaine Isabelle); "Learning French Through Music" (Suzanne Pinel); "The Point of View of a Francophone Outside Quebec" (Jacqueline Neatby); "Preschoolers Enjoy Learning French Too!" (Deanna Cazes); "The Young Child's View of Starting French Immersion" (Sandra Weber, Claudette Tardif); "Secondary Immersion: A Manitoba Solution" (Linda Asper); "Three Basic Questions About French Immersion: Research Findings" (Merrill Swain); "The Hidden Handicap: French Immersion and Children with Learning Disabilities" (Wendy J. Burnett); The Academic, Intellectual, and Linguistic Benefits of Bilingualism" (Jim Cummins); "Beyond Bilingualism: Sociocultural Studies of Immersion" (Fred Genesee); "Administrative Challenges of Early French Immersion" (W. R. McGillivray); "Immersion Teacher Education: The Making of a Professional" (Pierre Calve); "Beyond the Classroom in Rural Saskatchewan" (Laura Van Loon, Marjorie Scharf); "In the Footsteps of Demosthenes 'en francais: le Festival national d'art oratoire'" (Hildi Konok); and "Canadian Parents for French" (Kathryn Manzer). (MSE)

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So You Want Your Child to Learn French!

SECOND REVISED EDITION

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Edited by
Berkeley Fleming and Margaret Whitla

CPF Canadian Parents for French

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To all young Canadians who are learning and using French.

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Foreword

D'Iberville Fortier
Commissioner of Official Languages

Congratulations to Canadian Parents for French on the appearance of this revised edition of *So You Want Your Child to Learn French!* The fact that demand has necessitated a second edition demonstrates the value and popularity of the first volume as a practical guide for parents planning their children's education, the progress in studies of second-language teaching, and the value of the work done country-wide by Canadian Parents for French.

With the recognition in 1969 of equal status in federal institutions for our two official languages, second-language learning in Canada took on a special importance, and it became evident to many that acquiring a knowledge of the other language would be an asset.

As I said in my first Annual Report (1984), 'A country is above all a matter of belonging and becoming. History gave Canada two of the world's great languages and two of its richest cultures.' Canadian Parents for French (CPF) is helping us to enjoy the benefits of both worlds. It is a spur to both the belonging and the becoming.

Since its foundation in 1977, CPF has grown to number 18,000 members in 200 chapters across Canada. Surely these figures are testimony to the popularity among English-speaking Canadians of French as a second language, as well as to the efficiency and timeliness of CPF and its endeavours.

Immersion is a popular form of language instruction, the one we seem to hear most about, and an extremely effective means of producing bilingual graduates. Enrolments continue to increase, standing in 1988 at 241,000, which was an increase of 9 percent from the figure for the previous year.

The various forms of French immersion are not the only type of second-language training program encouraged by Canadian Parents for French. As CPF's National President, Kathryn Manzer, told readers of the Summer 1989 issue of my quarterly review, *Language and Society*, various core French and French immersion programs may serve different needs better than a rigid adherence to a single system.

I believe the enduring success of CPF reflects the organization's flexibility and its willingness and ability to recognize the realities of Canadian life and society and to deal with them in practical ways. The appearance of this revised version of a useful and justly popular book is evidence of that practicality and intellectual efficiency. The opportunities for that excellence in French language teaching which Canadian Parents for French champions across Canada are a reflection of the ambition of the organization itself. I am confident that this useful new edition of *So You Want Your Child to Learn French!* will repeat the impressive success of its predecessor.

Introduction

Berkeley Fleming and Margaret Whitla

So You Want Your Child to Learn French! It is reasonable to assume that most people opening a book with this title either have children of their own or play a role in helping children learn (or both). They are looking for practical advice on how to help children learn French and on how to promote improved and more accessible French second-language (FSL) programs in their communities. They are seeking the answers provided by educational researchers who have studied FSL programs. They are members of the generation, clearly and consistently identified in a number of public opinion polls, who support bilingualism. This book is aimed precisely at such an audience. It should be of special interest to parents of young children, but it is not exclusively for them.

This is the second edition of *So You Want Your Child to Learn French!* The first edition, published by Canadian Parents for French (CPF) in 1979, had its origins in the 1972 and 1976 editions of *What's What for Children Learning French*, published by the Citizens' Committee on Children (CCC). We are grateful to Beth Mlacak of CPF and Elaine Isabelle of CCC, co-editors of the first edition of this book, for their pioneering work. The significance of the first edition is indicated by the continuing demand for it some eleven years later, long after supplies of that volume have been exhausted.

Much has changed since the first edition was published. In 1979, French immersion was still considered an experiment in most parts

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Margaret Whitla, a part-time Lecturer in Office Administration Studies at Mount Allison University, has served on local and provincial executives of Canadian Parents for French in New Brunswick. She and her husband have three sons. One is a core French graduate studying music, another is an early immersion graduate now in engineering, and the youngest is an early immersion student currently completing high school.

of the country and was dismissed as a mere middle-class fad in some circles. Since that time, French immersion programs have proliferated and expanded, and core French programs have improved throughout the country. Researchers today know a great deal more about the learning of French as a second language. Some of their current questions are basic ones, rooted in part in legitimate parental concerns about such matters as the English language skills of early French immersion students, the relative advantages of different FSL programs, and so on. It is important for new parents to know about the consistently positive conclusions reached by researchers on such questions. Educational researchers are also raising new questions in response to changes in the nature and popularity of the various FSL programs as well as recent pedagogical advances.

For all of these reasons, the National Board of Canadian Parents for French determined that there was a need for a new edition of *So You Want Your Child to Learn French!* The book that has resulted is a blend of the revised work of some of the original authors and new contributions from a number of other writers. Each article has been written specifically for this book, and together the contributions address the major issues of interest to our readers.

Parents need to know more about the various programs available in order to make informed choices. Parents need information about how students learn a second language in order to help their own children learn French. Parents need to learn about previous, successful efforts to persuade school boards to implement, expand, or improve good second-language programs. We wanted this book to include a balance of theoretical background and down-to-earth advice for parents. Although some of the articles in this book address issues in an academic fashion, in terms of developments in pedagogical theory or from the perspective of recent research results, many contributions also address the topics in a very practical way.

We intend this book to be honest and positive at the same time. Parents should be told the truth; there are challenges associated with the provision of opportunities for the teaching and learning of French as a second language, and a number of our authors have examined objectively the more problematic current issues involved. We also want parents to know that past experience shows that knowledge, cooperation, and the provision of appropriate resources have often helped in the meeting of such challenges.

We would like to comment specifically on the important subject of FSL teacher supply, which several of our authors do mention. CPF recognizes the seriousness of this matter and has been discussing it in national and provincial conferences, meetings, and newsletters. Teachers' associations and educational decision-makers at various levels are also tackling the issue. The interaction among all these interested parties has already resulted in positive measures being taken, but sustained cooperative efforts are required as FSL programs in Canada continue to expand.

Young people growing up in Canada today have many opportunities, including the one to become bilingual. We hope this book will be helpful in presenting some of the choices which should be considered when making decisions regarding the education of Canadian children. Also, we hope that it includes some useful suggestions for supporting those children as they progress through their chosen program.

We thank the authors of the articles, the illustrator, the graphic designer, and the members of the editorial board for their industry and patience. In addition, we thank the staff members at Mount Allison University who have assisted us in various ways. We also acknowledge with gratitude the financial support towards the publication of this book provided by the Secretary of State of Canada.

The opinions expressed by contributors to this book are their own, and do not necessarily reflect the views of Canadian Parents for French.

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Why Bilingualism?

Steven G. MacKinnon

Language plays a major role in the definition and identity of any country. In Canada we have devoted much time, money, and energy to determining to what extent and in which ways we want language to define and identify our society. Canadians like to complain about the irritants entailed in accommodating another language. Nevertheless, for many Canadians there is an underlying pride that we have worked out a system wherein two vibrant and innovative language communities can live side by side. Mark Starowicz, Executive Producer of CBC's *The Journal*, said it best: 'What unites us – sometimes only in heated argument – is that we have consented to a process of negotiating with each other ... a system of common values for today.' (1989)

As a result of this process of negotiation, bilingualism is a reality, and laws and constitutional guarantees exist to protect it. Canadians have consistently elected governments which have promoted tolerance, understanding, and equality between the two language communities. To be sure, there are die-hard constituencies who would have us reverse a generations-old trend towards equality, but their numbers are in constant decline as a new, more flexible generation emerges.

As Canada moves towards a new century, we should make a collective decision to exploit, and no longer waste our energies opposing, this entrenched Canadian reality. We are now living in the post-industrial age, in a time when communication links and information are among our most valuable commodities. International borders are becoming less and less significant as trade is liberalized and monetary systems are harmonized. Countries which can take advantage of these changes will enjoy a new prosperity.

Canada is well placed to move aggressively forward into the post-industrial age. Our bilingual and bicultural nature is a

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tremendous asset, allowing us to communicate with people virtually anywhere in the world. Also, our capabilities in translation and communications represent tremendous economic potential, creating job opportunities and new high-tech industries. In addition, with leisure time now increasing and the international tourism industry expected to grow in leaps and bounds, the existence of two distinct and vigorous cultures represents a major attraction for the rest of the world. Almost without realizing it, our country has prepared itself for the dawn of a new age.

The cornerstone now laid, it is time to make a collective decision to build upon our assets and play to our strengths. A collective decision, however, is made up of a series of individual decisions – decisions that many Canadian parents must make and are making in ever-increasing numbers. One decision is, of course, that of having your child learn French. In order to make permanent our bilingual society, we must keep enriching our children by giving them a chance to learn two languages.

However, this is not a decision that parents should make without careful consideration. I entered late French immersion quite tentatively, not quite knowing what to expect. At the outset, this sentiment was the one common thread which bonded me and my classmates. But somehow I knew, even at the age of eleven, that I was doing the right thing. It was precisely that feeling of 'entering the unknown' that made learning French enjoyable. My class soon acquired a taste for rising to the challenge and testing our newfound abilities.

After six short years of French immersion together, we had a genuine *esprit de corps* and feeling of accomplishment. Not only were we now through the dreaded days of high school, but we had also added another accomplishment with relatively little extra effort and in the same amount of time. For my part, I knew that I possessed something indescribable in tangible terms. My parents, once tentative about enrolling me in French immersion, were amazed when I informed them that it was the best decision that they had ever made.

I do not wish to imply that bilingualism and second-language education are always for everyone, because they aren't. That is something that each parent must judge. Yet, the process of learning a second language can be one of the most enriching experiences that any young person can have, and our country can move forward

much more quickly and confidently by having a sophisticated, literate, and 'culturally aware' generation to lead us into the twenty-first century.

Learning a second language involves much more than reading, writing, and speaking. It is a process of enrichment that goes far beyond any classroom or work setting. It instills in a young person the ability to appreciate another culture, another way of life, another set of values, and another way of thinking. Contrary to the opinions of some, learning a second language does not detract from a child's abilities in his or her first language. In fact, it sometimes affords an opportunity to 'step out' of one's culture and examine it from the outside. Also, the process of learning a second language can improve one's ability to master one's mother tongue, and provide a new way of approaching grammar, spelling, and semantics. In essence, it expands the mind and allows for a more objective and open-minded approach to learning.

Of course, being bilingual also increases one's future employment opportunities. The ability to converse with co-workers in their mother tongue is one that is prized by employers, both in the private and public sectors. What many people do not realize, however, is that being bilingual can also greatly improve another important talent – social skills. This may be the most valued talent in the workplace today. Not only can a bilingual employee converse with his or her co-workers and the public, but the broader perspective acquired in learning a second language helps one to understand the set of values behind a colleague's opinions, decisions, or judgements. The value of this ability cannot be overstated.

Another important benefit of being bilingual is the sense of comfort one feels at being able to travel anywhere in Canada, indeed around the world, and being able to understand and easily adapt to another culture. Paintings seem clearer, people more congenial, food tastier, and places more beautiful if one can understand their background and origins.

The commitment of time and energy necessary to master a second language is all worthwhile. The practice and more practice, which is the key to full and fluent bilingualism, is a very pleasurable experience because you 'learn as you go.' As a result of this commitment, a child will develop into a well rounded and talented adult. Bilingualism, like the ability to sing, can be a treasured asset, yet undefined in monetary terms; you can take it anywhere

and use it at will; it is particularly effective in group settings; and it can ensure a lifetime's worth of success.

Although, as I have argued earlier, Canada will benefit greatly by having a large number of bilingual citizens, don't have your children learn French for the good of the country – do it for the good of your children. They, as I did, will say *merci* for it later.

Reference

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French Second-Language Programs: Alternative Approaches

Henry P. Edwards

In Canada, there are more French second-language program alternatives for school children than anywhere else in the world. Programs vary in intensity, population, point of entry, duration, objectives, and teaching/learning issues. Therefore, it is often difficult for parents to determine the characteristics of the programs offered by local school boards and to select the most appropriate programs for their children.

This article outlines several dimensions along which Canadian programs differ from one another, and discusses some implications of these differences. The author hopes to help parents better understand the available second-language programs. Since this article is intended for readers throughout Canada, the author has consciously avoided the use of terms that may be specific to any one province.

Program Intensity

French second-language programs vary in intensity from twenty-minute classes within an English language curriculum to 100 percent of each day's instruction in French. Below are outlined the typical features of the core, extended core, partial immersion, total immersion, and French school options.

Core programs are the least intense. In a typical core program, the students follow a standard curriculum taught in English, with French classes of up to forty minutes' duration several times per week. The French classes are devoted to the study of French as a second language.

Extended core programs are intermediate between the core and partial immersion alternatives. They can be viewed as an 'enriched' version of core programs. Typically, an extended core program

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involves taking French as a second language plus one other subject in French, within a standard curriculum taught in English.

Partial immersion programs are more intense, and differ substantially from core programs in that the teaching of some subjects (for example, arithmetic) takes place through the medium of the second language. One may think of partial immersion programs as ranging from a minimum of one hour per day to a maximum of 50 percent of daily instruction in French.

In total immersion programs, more than 50 percent of all instruction is given in French, with emphasis on subject matter teaching via the second language. At first, all instruction is given in French. Subjects taught in English are introduced gradually, some time after the first two years.

The most intense option, primarily available in Quebec, is French school. In this option, children study a French language curriculum intended for Francophone students, together with native Francophone peers.

Student Population

The student population may vary across programs, depending on the intensity, entry point, and location of individual programs. French school programs will probably include a majority of Francophone students, even when located in a predominantly English-speaking area. The other program options discussed in this article are intended for Anglophone students.

In programs with early or middle entry points (kindergarten to Grade 5), the students will be reasonably representative of the total student population of the school system, although the weakest students or those with language disabilities tend to be underrepresented in immersion programs. Some programs screen applicants prior to entry and select pupils on the basis of scholastic readiness, etc. In these programs, the immersion student population is necessarily a more select one. Students in late immersion programs (starting in Grade 6 or later) tend to be self-selected and are a motivated and able subgroup rather than a representative sample of the total student population.

The location of the program is also related to the characteristics of the students enrolled in it. For example, in areas where French immersion is most popular, the immersion student population will

resemble the total student population in the school district. Where immersion programs are less common, the immersion student population is more likely to include a higher proportion of high achieving, high socioeconomic level students than the total student population. If an immersion program is not offered in the neighbourhood school, those parents who are ambivalent about the value of the program may not enrol their children in it, and the consequence will be a more select student population within the immersion program.

Point of Entry

The entry points of core, extended core, and partial immersion programs vary. Grade 1 is a frequent starting point, but some of these programs commence as late as high school. Early immersion programs begin in kindergarten or Grade 1, middle immersion in Grades 3 to 5, and late immersion in Grades 6 to 8.

Most available studies favour an early entry point. This author agrees, for several reasons: the youngest pupils have not yet developed psychological barriers against the acquisition of a second language; they can spend a greater number of hours in second-language instruction before the end of the program; their efforts are readily rewarded by parents and peers; and according to available data neither the development of their English skills nor their school achievement suffers.

This being said, research evidence shows that late immersion programs are successful **for those students who enrol in them**, and middle immersion as well as partial immersion programs are supported by positive though more limited data. When all is said and done, the major advantage of the earliest entry point may be that it is compatible with the greatest number of hours of instruction in French, which in turn is related to the final level of French skills attained by the students.

Duration of the Program

The duration of any French second-language program may be expressed as the total number of hours of instruction in French. For example, an early total immersion program beginning in Grade 1 may entail more than 5,000 hours of instruction in French; early

partial immersion and middle immersion programs 2,000 to 5,000 hours; late immersion programs up to 2,000 hours; extended core programs up to 1,400 hours; and core programs 1,000 or fewer hours.

The interested parent may calculate the duration of a specific program by determining, for each grade, the number of instruction hours in French per week, and multiplying by the number of weeks in the school year. The calculation has some importance because the duration of the program expressed in this manner (as a combination of years and intensity) may then be related to the realistic objectives of the program.

Objectives of the Program

In general terms, programs may be divided into those whose average students may be expected to reach the basic, middle, or top levels of French skills. This classification is based on, but not identical to, one first detailed in the 1974 *Report of the Ministerial Committee on the Teaching of French*, also known as the Gillin Report.[1]

Basic level A student who has reached the basic level should have a fundamental knowledge of the French language (grammar, vocabulary, pronunciation); be able to read simple texts; and be able to participate in simple conversation. This level is considered to be achievable through 1,000 to 1,500 hours of instruction in French. The basic level is an attainable objective for a good core program and for extended core programs.

Middle level A student who has reached the middle level should be able to read newspapers and books of personal interest with

1 The classification has since been elaborated and refined in two editions of an Ontario Ministry of Education (OME) publication entitled *Teaching and Learning French as a Second Language* (1977) and *Teaching and Learning French as a Second Language in the 1980s* (1984). A third edition of this OME publication, including updated definitions of the levels of French skills expected and new estimates of the hours involved in different programs, is due to be released in the spring of 1990.

Like the OME, other provincial ministries and departments of education have argued that there is a demonstrable relationship between the number of hours and intensity of instruction in French and the French proficiency achieved.

occasional help from a dictionary; understand French radio and television programs; participate in everyday conversation; function reasonably well in a French-speaking community after residing in it for a few months; and have some appreciation of French-Canadian culture. This level is considered to be achievable through 2,000 to 2,500 hours of instruction in French. The middle level is an attainable objective of partial immersion, middle immersion, and late immersion programs.

Top level A student who has reached the top level should be able to pursue further education in a bilingual or French language post-secondary institution; function reasonably well after a few months in an employment setting using French as the working language; participate easily in conversation; and have a basic appreciation of the attitudes and values held in common by members of the French-speaking community. This level is considered to be achievable through at least 5,000 hours of instruction in French. The top level is an attainable objective of French school programs which accept Anglophone students; of early total immersion programs; and of some, but not all, partial immersion and middle immersion programs.

For the sake of completeness, a fourth level should be mentioned, the ***native level.*** A person who has reached this level should be virtually indistinguishable from native Francophones when using the French language. This level may be reached by Anglophone children who, from an early age, reside in a primarily Francophone environment and are schooled in French. All available data indicate that the native level is not an attainable objective of any second-language school program offered to Anglophone children who reside in a largely Anglophone environment. This is not in any way a criticism of the available programs. The reality is that native-like French skills require prolonged and varied exposure to a French language environment and to a very large number of native French language models in various social and work contexts.

The extent to which the programs offered by individual school boards across Canada achieve the above objectives, and the extent to which they may attain additional stated objectives, are not yet sufficiently documented. More evaluation studies are needed. A recent postsecondary follow-up of former French immersion students in the Ottawa area (Wesche, Morrison, Pawley, and Ready

1986; Wesche 1988) concluded that immersion graduates, though not native-like in their French, demonstrated high levels of functional ability in speaking, reading, listening comprehension, and knowledge of the language.

Teaching/Learning Issues

In general, partial and total French immersion programs follow a standard school curriculum, except that some or all subjects are taught in French, by teachers who have native-like fluency in French. In addition, French may be taught as a subject in its own right, but most authors don't consider this essential to the immersion approach. What is essential is real-life, meaningful communication with French-speaking teachers who provide appropriate models of the language for the pupils, at a level which is comprehensible to them while furthering their current language skills, and in a context which does not provoke anxiety. In addition, the development of French language skills may be facilitated by various means, such as schools devoted exclusively to immersion (immersion centres), French library materials and audio-visual aids, field trips in French, and exchange visits with French-speaking students.

Concluding Comments

Finally, it is important to recognize that any school program, including those discussed in this article, must be able to accomplish all key learning objectives while facilitating the personal and social development of the pupils. For this reason, parents are encouraged to consider the suitability of any program for their individual children, both as a scholastic program independently of language considerations and as an opportunity for acquiring French as a second language.

In general terms, most available research and evaluation literature leads to two conclusions. First, any one of the programs reviewed above should be considered successful, **depending on the objectives envisaged**. Second, none of the programs reviewed above is contra-indicated for any identifiable group of children, including children with learning disabilities or limited scholastic potential.

This should not, however, lead parents to conclude that every program is necessarily suitable for every individual child. Finding the optimal program for an individual child requires, in the final analysis, an informed parental judgement in consultation with the relevant school personnel, namely, teachers and principals.

This article has reviewed the major characteristics of available French second-language programs and has highlighted those characteristics which, in the author's view, would most interest parents. The author's intent has been to provide guidelines which may enable parents to ask the most appropriate questions, and thus arrive at considered decisions when placing their child in a given program. The table below summarizes the major program characteristics discussed above. It is followed by several references which summarize the research and evaluation studies which are most relevant to the appreciation of existing second-language program options.

Characteristics of Alternative French Second-Language Programs

Characteristics	Programs						
	Core French	Extended Core	Late Imm.	Partial Imm.	Middle Imm.	Early Imm.	French School
Intensity	Low	Low	M/H	Medium	M/H	High	Higher
Students*	E	E	E	E	E	E	E/F
Grade of Entry**	V	V	6-8	V	3-5	K-1	K-1
Hours***	<1,000	<1,400	2,000	>2,000	>3,000	>5,000	>8,000
Level	Basic	Basic	Middle	Mid/Top	Mid/Top	Top	Top
Subject Matter in French	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes

* E: Native English-speaking students and students normally attending English schools whose mother tongue is other than English or French.
F: Native French-speaking students

** V: Variable entry point as determined by individual school boards.

*** The hours presented are estimates. Actual numbers of hours vary from one school board to another.

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Core French: A Brighter Future

Janet Poyen and Judy Gibson

In 1974 the Ontario Ministry of Education made public the results of the *Report of the Ministerial Committee on the Teaching of French* (the Gillin Report), which set out the objectives for three types of French programs – core, extended, and immersion – and the hours of instruction which were expected to meet those objectives. The authors believed that a basic level of proficiency could be achieved in core French through a program of 1,200 hours (forty minutes a day for ten years). A core French graduate would have: a fundamental knowledge of the language; the ability to participate in simple conversation; an active vocabulary of 3,000 to 5,000 words; the ability to read standard texts with the aid of a dictionary; a basic knowledge and appreciation of the culture and aspirations of French-speaking Canadians; and the ability to resume the study of French at a later date.

In spite of the definitive guidelines and options provided by the Gillin Report, many educators and parents persisted in having unrealistic expectations of core French. Many wanted to believe that a 1,200-hour program could produce immersion-like results. Others tried to reach the core French objectives without coming close to the time commitment required. Since very few jurisdictions in the country could claim to offer a ten-year continuous program, it was difficult to ascertain if the objectives could be met. Not producing high levels of fluency, and not even meeting its own objectives, core French fell into disrepute while immersion gained in popularity.

But as the concept of 'communicative language teaching' took hold among second-language educators in Europe, the United States, and Canada, a brighter future for core French became a

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possibility. The late Dr. H.H. Stern of the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education was one prominent researcher who believed that our expectations for core French were not high enough. Given the proper conditions, more ambitious objectives could be set. [1]

The Communicative Approach

The goal of communicative language teaching is **to teach the language for the purpose of communicating**. This may not seem revolutionary until one is reminded that the goal of traditional language programs has been quite different. Until very recently, French and other second languages were taught not with a view to what students would be able to do with the language, but with the objective of mastering grammatical structures. Vocabulary lists and verb conjugations were memorized; set-pattern dialogues were recited; and passages were read aloud to illustrate grammatical points and as a means of correcting pronunciation. Games and songs provided a change of pace, but were usually unrelated to the curriculum. Of prime importance was the complete, grammatically correct sentence, usually studied in isolation rather than as part of an authentic act of communication. If communication became important in the classroom – for exercising discipline, giving directions, explaining grammatical rules, talking about culture – most teachers resorted to English.

The new emphasis on communication is the result of the following: major advances in the theories of language and language learning in the past two decades; the Council of Europe's Modern Language Project focusing on functional use of the second language; and the success of French immersion. Communication is now regarded as both the means and the end of language teaching. In other words, the best way to learn a language is to use it, concentrating on the message rather than on the form of the language. Students are asked to use the language in activities that resemble authentic situations.

Beyond this concept there is not much agreement on what constitutes a 'communicative approach.' It is not a strictly oral method, although listening and speaking have assumed much greater

1 Dr. Stern held the same views about French immersion and felt that the research carried out for core French would ultimately benefit the immersion program as well.

importance. Nor does it mean a total disregard for grammar, as some have suggested; instead, grammar becomes the servant rather than the master of language production. Explicit language teaching takes place in order to improve the quality of communication, at a time when it will not interfere with the communication process. Language is taught either before or after, but never while, students are engaged in sharing ideas and information.

One variation of the communicative approach is to have the students study the language first and then experience it in some type of authentic communication, making contact with the second-language community in the classroom or on excursions. These activities, which can include interviewing native speakers, role playing, watching television, reading or listening to messages, and playing games, are used as a follow-up to language study.

Experiential Language Learning

A more experiential approach, resembling the natural learning process that occurs when one is thrust into a foreign language environment, is recommended by a recent Canadian project known as the National Core French Study. With this approach, the curriculum is carefully designed to include topics which relate to the students' interests, maturity level, and life experience. Students are assigned tasks or projects involving a variety of actual, real-life documents from which they are expected to extract information. Although the materials may be well above their level of comprehension, the students use learning strategies such as contextual clues and similarity to English documents to derive enough meaning to carry out the tasks. As is the case in an immersion classroom, the students learn the language while their attention is focused on the message, and with continued exposure to the language in this way students acquire enough French to get their own messages across.

As they experience success in communicating, the students' vocabularies increase, errors are reduced, and language use becomes more sophisticated. This process is assisted by having language lessons as a follow-up to the experiential activities, when the students feel the need to know something in order to express themselves better. The idea behind experiential learning is that the classroom takes on the attributes of the second-language environment. The students want to communicate and the stimulus is provided for them to do so in French.

The National Core French Study was proposed by Dr. Stern to answer the question, 'Will an enriched, multidimensional curriculum provide a more meaningful learning experience and lead to higher levels of proficiency?' It was an attempt to seek consensus on the type of curriculum necessary for successful communicative language teaching, the introduction of communicative activities into the program, and the corresponding changes in formal language study. He sought a more meaningful role for teaching culture in the Canadian context and for general language education (that is, comparing languages and cultures and developing strategies for language learning). For each of these four components – communicative activities, language, culture, and general language education – a syllabus was to be developed, which would then become part of a single, integrated multidimensional curriculum model.

Carried out from 1985 to 1989, the National Study received its major financial support from the Secretary of State of Canada and had the active participation of ten provincial departments or ministries of education. Its impact is expected to be widespread and long-lasting. The final report will influence not only provincial curriculum development and textbook publishing but also professional development, teacher education, and student and program evaluation policies. From its inception this project has enhanced the image of core French, fostered information sharing among the provinces, and led to new initiatives at many levels of the education system.

Conditions for Success

The National Core French Study has raised expectations for core French, not only by offering an enriched curriculum model, but also by clarifying the conditions necessary for success. The model is based on a time frame of forty minutes per day for nine years, from Grades 4 through 12. The teacher must be fluent in French, have an understanding of French-Canadian culture, and have up-to-date training in second-language methodology and evaluation procedures. The French class must have a permanent home, enriched with visual materials and other authentic documents, setting the atmosphere for speaking French. This is a far cry from the too often cited example of the French teacher rushing into a spare room with books and materials to teach for twenty minutes, three times a week!

The proposed curriculum and the conditions attached to it raise a number of important issues, the most critical of which is teacher supply. Fluency in French is an essential requirement for a communicative language teacher, who must make the language come alive for the students, conduct classes entirely in French, and be able to encourage unstructured and spontaneous learning.

Training in second-language methodology is of equal importance. Gone is the teacher-centered classroom where the teacher was the sole source of information, controlling what the students learned and limiting what they said to short, correct answers. In the communicative classroom students often work in pairs or groups, helping each other with the task at hand. The teacher becomes a facilitator, setting up the learning situations, keeping the students on task, and helping them to work in French. The teacher also informally assesses the students' progress to decide when explicit language instruction should take place. Traditional second-language specialists need considerable professional development to make the transition to this sort of approach.

As a Grade 4 start becomes accepted practice, increasing pressure is being put on the education system to find qualified French teachers. The cost of hiring extra teachers specifically for French has seemed prohibitive to many school boards; on the other hand, upgrading the language skills of the regular classroom teachers is also costly. Current wisdom suggests that the most practical solution is to use the classroom teacher provided that teacher has a reasonable facility in French. Farsighted boards have begun to take French skills into account when hiring at the Grade 4 to 6 level.

Talented elementary teachers adapt easily to the communicative approach because they are used to student-centered classrooms and the whole-language approach to teaching language arts. Moreover, the attractive new commercial programs are clearly explained and easy to use, and the language involved is not too demanding in the early grades. Thus there is hope in the long term for a satisfactory solution to the teacher supply problem at the elementary level. In the meantime, teachers are often required to trade teaching duties so that one or two can cover the French program for an entire school.

There is general awareness at all levels of the system, from the federal government down, that teacher training, retraining, and professional development must become the prime focus of attention. Efforts are being made to ensure that faculties of education

are aware of the qualifications needed by teachers to handle the new curriculum. The teacher availability problem, however, will be with us for a long time, and goodwill and resourcefulness will be required to bring about satisfactory short-term solutions.

Another issue in the implementation of a communicative approach is the question of student evaluation. Testing students' abilities to communicate by means of oral interviews carried out by trained evaluators is difficult, time-consuming, and expensive. Yet, if students are not formally tested on such objectives, they will get the message that the program goals are not important. Curriculum guides and provincial exams must change. Several provinces have already instituted standardized oral testing and others are taking steps to do so.

Evaluation procedures must change in the classroom as well. Again, it is oral production which is the most difficult to assess. Teachers will have to become skilled in observation techniques so that student performance can be assessed while students are interacting with each other and with the teacher during regular classroom activities. Provided there are guidelines to ensure objectivity, teacher observation can be a reliable form of evaluation, as valid as formal written tests.

Aural/oral testing also presents a challenge in school-wide testing. Exam schedules must be able to accommodate oral interviews conducted by teachers who would otherwise be supervising exams. Although not a serious problem, this does require the support of school administrators.

The new multidimensional curriculum raises the question of culture teaching, a topic which is becoming prominent in language-teaching literature. Familiarity with social and linguistic habits is considered necessary if one is to communicate appropriately with native speakers. As well, gaining an appreciation of the way of life of the second-language community helps to motivate the language learner. Whereas in the past culture teaching consisted mainly of folksongs and other traditional customs, today the focus is on contemporary, everyday life, taught in conjunction with the language. In Canada, we have even more justification for including a strong cultural component in the French curriculum. Our students should be able to appreciate and communicate with their fellow citizens, and should be preparing themselves to live successfully in a bilingual Canada.

Unfortunately for the grad student, the day she came to observe oral fluency was also the day of the class chess tournament.

The culture syllabus of the National Core French Study provides a plan of action for addressing the study of the various French-Canadian cultures, Canadian bilingualism, and other Francophone cultures around the world. This is a new field of study, without much previous research to consult, and therefore will require considerable elaboration by provincial governments and teachers' organizations. The syllabus sets the conditions necessary for success in culture teaching, one of which is that individual teachers should not have to take responsibility for finding their own materials and

developing their own curricula. A method will have to be found to provide teachers with the recommended cultural content, either within the textbook itself or through supplementary materials developed by provincial curriculum committees. The teacher's guide must contain enough background information to make the teacher comfortable with the subject.

The implications for teacher training are obvious. In the future, prospective teachers should be offered a course in Francophone cultures. And, of course, they must have the fluency to deal comfortably with all topics in French.

One other important issue raised by the National Core French Study is that of commitment to a continuous, nine-year program of forty minutes a day. (This would provide a total of 1,080 hours of instruction; the Gillin Report's 1,200 hours included Ontario's Grade 13.) All provinces must take responsibility for requiring the program in the elementary grades so that students arrive at the secondary level with roughly the same skills, ready, willing, and able to take part in a French program geared to their interests and experience. Too often the first year of secondary French is repetitious for some, yet requires catching up for others who have had no previous French, resulting in frustration for all, including the teacher.

Many school principals begrudge the time taken for French in what they consider a crowded timetable. Finding a good teacher is often a low priority and, when classes must be cut to accommodate special events, it is not unusual to find that the French class has been cancelled. Such open opposition and passive resistance can only be overcome by requiring schools to offer French to all students for forty minutes a day in the elementary grades and perhaps the first year of secondary school. In time, the program should prove itself as a valuable contribution to a student's overall education, and, it is hoped, administrative support will grow.

Although important, class size is considered by theorists to be the least vital of the conditions for a successful core French program. It is undoubtedly less satisfactory to deal with a class of thirty-five than with one of twenty, but the new emphasis on group work at least affords students the opportunity to communicate regularly. If the other criteria are not met, even the smallest class will not achieve the program goals.

Enhancing the Core French Program

Where the teaching of French enjoys a particularly high priority, an early start increases the opportunity for success. Not only does it provide additional instructional time, but children of this age are able to acquire the most native-like accent, love to mimic, and are tolerant of repetitive teaching of the basic vocabulary and sounds of a language. In New Brunswick, for instance, school boards are required to provide at least 540 hours of instruction in Grades 1 through 6 (an average of thirty minutes per day). By the end of Grade 12, more than 1,200 hours will have been made available to interested students.

However, an early start should be considered an enhancement of a solid nine-year program and should not be implemented at the expense of the program in the later elementary years. The curriculum proposed by the National Core French Study cannot be accomplished in very short periods of instruction. Where financial resources and numbers of qualified teaching staff are limited, providing forty minutes per day in Grades 4 through 6 is better than offering fifteen to twenty minutes in Grades 1 through 6.

A number of school boards across the country are extending their core programs by teaching one or two other subjects in French. As well as increasing instructional time, extended core gives the students additional opportunities to use French in a meaningful way. This concept has the potential to enhance the core French program significantly, and it will be interesting to review research results as they become available. One must remember, however, that extended core cannot be expected to achieve the high level of proficiency attained through immersion.

Extended programs can be organized in several ways. They can begin at any grade level before senior secondary. Any subject or combination of subjects may be taught in French. Ontario's Carleton Roman Catholic Separate School Board offers all elementary students about seventy minutes of instruction in French per day beginning in kindergarten. In Grade 7 they may continue with fifty minutes per day or enrol in late immersion. This format provides an opportunity for students to reach at least a middle level of proficiency in French.

The concept of extended core French can also be used to provide adequate instructional time to reach the basic level of proficiency.

The Edmonton Public Schools' optional program in Grades 4 to 6 comprises thirty minutes per day in the study of French and thirty minutes in another subject. The junior high follow-up offers a minimum of 160 minutes per week. Graduates may accumulate a total of 1,275 hours of instruction in French.

Many other creative solutions are being developed to provide sufficient classroom contact time to reach the basic goals of core French. As Dr. Stern explained:

> Core programs in the future should increasingly be designed in such a way as to establish links with other language subjects (English language arts, heritage languages, etc.) as well as links with other relevant curriculum areas (e.g., music, art, dance, social studies, drama) ... . Moreover, any school subject can of course contribute subject matter to the core program. This is a lesson of the immersion experience that has not yet been adequately learned for the benefit of core programs. (1983, 3-4)

Across Canada, teachers, school board coordinators, and parent groups such as Canadian Parents for French (CPF) are also enriching core French programs by providing additional communicative and cultural activities. Opportunities to enjoy French in non-academic settings and use it for authentic communication not only supplement the curriculum but also are important motivators. The variety of ideas is almost overwhelming: exchanges, 'mini-immersion' experiences, French weeks, *francofêtes*, French achievement days, excursions, visits, speaking contests, summer camps, guest speakers, and so forth.

Parents can play a significant role by helping to develop positive attitudes towards French and promoting use of the language. As parents you can encourage your child to read French books, magazines, and comics, watch French television, and listen to French radio and records. You can take the family to a French restaurant, participate in activities sponsored by your local Francophone association, or help the school with the organization of an enrichment activity. You can even ask your child to teach **you** some French! The various CPF publications contain a wealth of practical ideas even for parents who have never studied the language themselves.

Conclusion

How can you tell if your child is in a quality core French class? First, you should look at the support that the program receives from the school board. What commercial materials have been

purchased by the board? Is the program articulated; that is, is there a logical flow from year to year and from elementary to secondary to avoid gaps and needless repetition? How much professional development does the teacher receive? Beyond that, you should establish what support the school (namely the principal) offers. How many minutes per class? How many days per week? Is it a solid part of the curriculum or the first thing to be dropped if regular programming is disrupted? Does the teacher have his or her own classroom so that visual materials can be displayed and the students know they are in a French environment?

Does the teacher speak French and use it for managing classroom activities? At the elementary level compromises are sometimes necessary. If the school board is using the regular classroom teacher to teach the French program, that teacher may not speak fluent French. Such teachers need a lot of support from the French consultant or coordinator and must rely heavily on audio-visual materials. You may not be able to ask for more than this right now, but remember that a talented elementary teacher can make sure that the right things happen in the class. At the secondary level, are there French specialists who are comfortable in the language and who have recently had methodology courses or extensive professional development?

Finally, you should look for indications that the teacher is using a communicative approach. Is the class student-centered, with the teacher facilitating independent activities and spontaneous communication? Is there a lot of project work where the students have a chance to interact and work with authentic documents in French? Does learning take place as a result of the students' need to know something? Can the teacher handle the correction of errors in a subtle manner without stifling expression by constant interruptions?

The requirements for a successful core French program may seem overwhelming, and may provide an easy excuse for not implementing it on a mandatory basis. However, to deny students the opportunity to learn Canada's other official language for these reasons is educationally indefensible. It is important to realize that many school jurisdictions will fall short of the standards at the start. Whatever requirements can be met, however, will be a step in the right direction. Commitment to a new core French curriculum and the results it can achieve is an important step towards a brighter future for core French programs across Canada.

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The Parents' Role

Deborah Whale

As parents, we have a vital role to play in the education of our children. From the onset of school entry, we make decisions which will affect their future. One of the most significant decisions is whether to put those children into an immersion or core French program. As with all decisions, the 'who, why, where, and when' questions have to be asked and answered, and the consequences of those answers weighed and accepted. We will have to decide just how important to the future of each child is the learning of French within the school system. We will also have to determine how competent in the French language we hope that child will become.

The amount of French learned is directly related to the amount of instructional time and practice. For example, a forty minute per day core French program allows 120 hours of exposure to French per year, whereas a student in an early total immersion program will reach 1,500 hours before the end of Grade 2.

Whether the choice is core or immersion, we should be aware of two things. First, we need to have a realistic expectation of the fluency level our children will attain via any school-based language program. The learning of a language is a complex, cumulative process, and needs reinforcement outside the classroom. Second, in order for any language program to be the best it can and should be, parental support and interest are essential.

Therefore, in this article I shall stress the following: the importance of active participation in the educational process by those of us who have children in French as a second language (FSL) programs; the importance of assisting our children throughout their French programs and encouraging them to continue until graduation; and the importance of providing opportunities for our children to use their French outside the classroom.

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Keeping and Improving Your FSL Program
(Get involved and stay involved!)

The assumption I am making is that you already have the desired core or immersion French programs in your school district. If you haven't, run – don't walk – to your provincial Canadian Parents for French (CPF) office or get in touch with the local CPF contact person to learn how to lobby effectively for what is missing. After all, you do have a right to a say in the education of your children, and CPF members have a wealth of experience to share.

No interested parent can afford to assume that established programs will function perfectly and eternally. To ensure a good program, you need to become involved in or even to create a local chapter of Canadian Parents for French. These chapters exist to establish effective communication between parents and school boards. They pass on information about FSL research, books, materials, exchanges, and activities. They plan extracurricular activities in French. They monitor the effectiveness of their FSL programs. Your CPF provincial organization can provide your chapter with a great deal of help in accomplishing your goals.

Don't make the mistake of not joining or not starting a local CPF chapter. They are effective organizations which help groups of interested parents to ensure that their children's French programs remain worthwhile. Organized parents working for their children's interests are usually very successful.

Lobbying is not done only in times of crisis. It is a way of keeping systems running smoothly, and of keeping all participants informed and cooperative. Immersion programs continually face challenges, such as what subjects to offer in French, the supply of fluently bilingual teachers, funding, transportation, and the location of programs. Core programs must deal with itinerant teachers, teacher supply, classroom materials, designated space, and so forth. Therefore, you must be interested in creating a network of contacts among the trustees, the administrative personnel, the parents, and of course, the local press. Remember the time limitations of the people you are dealing with and don't expect them to deliver the impossible. Make every effort to keep these people well informed about developments in French second-language education. Many CPF chapters have set up systems in order to do this well. Get on your school board's mailing list by filing a request with the secretary of the board. Send at least one chapter representative to every board meeting and make a point of introducing yourselves to a few

trustees at an appropriate time. Make an annual presentation to the Education Committee outlining your chapter's activities in support of the FSL programs in your area. Sponsor at least one extracurricular activity annually for the students, making sure to inform the press in advance of the event. Support your classroom teachers by volunteering and providing classroom materials. Take a consultant or superintendent to lunch. Recognize the areas where administrators and parents can work together.

Parents can indeed work very effectively within the educational system to make a difference in the FSL programs offered.

You and Your FSL Child

(The unilingual parent and French homework!)

Even unilingual parents of immersion or core students have substantial opportunities to help with and show an interest in their children's French language subjects. You can and you should.

For primary children, I think the rules for parents are fairly simple. Be enthusiastic and positive. Don't ask children to show off for grandmother. (They won't anyway!) Read to them often in English. Buy a few simple French books and some French records suitable to their age level. Be sure to trade with your friends and donate outgrown material to your school. Consider registering the children in French language summer day camps.

One thing more – even though immersion and core programs are designed for children whose parents don't speak French, I personally think that parents should learn enough French to count, know colours and other basic words, and pronounce children's vocabulary lists relatively well. It is fun for you, and certainly makes the children think they are quite clever in comparison with Mom or Dad!

As children advance through the grades, things heat up a bit. Homework starts to appear, as well as the dreaded 'project.' Some teachers are glad that parents can't help with homework, but I disagree. There are several things the unilingual parent can do to be helpful and show an interest. Perhaps the first is to make sure that your home is supplied with necessary resource materials: French-English dictionaries at the appropriate ability level, and for the older student (Grade 5 and up) a French-French dictionary, a verb book, a dictionary of synonyms and antonyms, a book of common French expressions and idioms, a French language atlas, and a membership card for the nearest public library through which you

can order French reference books. Make sure that your children use these books, and encourage them to practice and retain the new vocabulary they encounter.

Once equipped, you can move on to giving the weekly *dictée* or, if your pronunciation is just too horrible, have the child tape his own and play it back. You can listen to reading in French at home, and you can always help with mathematics, as number concepts are the same in both languages. You can also help by asking leading questions like 'What does that mean?' or 'What does the teacher expect you to do?' or 'What are you trying to say?'

You can help with ideas which the child may not understand. For example, when one of my sons was in Grade 6, his class was reading a French book which centered around the happenings within a trade union. When I discovered he was having difficulty answering the questions at the end of the book, a few pointed questions soon established that it was not the story he didn't understand, it was the concept of a 'trade union' which he didn't grasp – an easy problem to solve.

The conclusion to all of this, of course, is that there are numerous ways to help your child even when the subject material is in French, and the effort reaps its own special rewards. The acquisition of another language is a tremendously worthwhile endeavour. It doesn't come easily. It takes time. It needs encouragement. It is

especially important, therefore, for parents to encourage their children to stay with their French programs until they graduate from high school.

Parents and Extracurricular Activities in French
(French twelve months a year!)

I definitely believe that a regular and planned exposure to as much French-outside-the-classroom as possible is the only way any immersion or core student can become truly bilingual. Let's face it – even a student in an early total immersion program spends only a few minutes out of every five-hour school day actually speaking French. There are many exciting ideas to draw from in order to give your children the necessary extracurricular exposure to French as a living and useful language. These can range from providing French books, music, and games at home to sending your children to summer camp in Quebec; from encouraging them to watch French television and listen to French radio to helping your CPF chapter sponsor a French theatre series; from sending students on an exchange to ordering French language movies for the school from the National Film Board. The possibilities are endless and very much depend on what you are comfortable doing.

CPF newsletters often have some excellent suggestions concerning language development, FSL activities, or resource materials. These do not have to be expensive. There are many free resources such as games, books, posters, and records in French from the Office of the Commissioner of Official Languages, some federal and provincial government departments, and some banks and other businesses. For example, I have an excellent child-oriented workbook on banking from our local bank; two colourful games from the Commissioner of Official Languages; a storybook on safety from the Farm Safety Association; and a book about the history of Ontario and its people from the Ministry of Education. There are also many commercially available materials, from comic books in French to the latest records. Some of the inexpensive French language magazines on the market will definitely provide worthwhile reading enjoyment as well as reference materials for school projects. CPF has lists of what is available, but one of my favourites for students twelve and up would be *Vidéo-Presse*.

Your CPF chapter's activities are limited only by your collective imagination and your time! Chapters across the country have

organized French theatre and movie series, Cubs and Brownies in French, after-school sports programs such as swimming or gymnastics in French, summer camps in French, and tours in French to local places of interest.

Among the best activities we have arranged for our sons have been longer-term exposures to the French language, which have made a marked improvement in their ability to speak French. For three summers, we registered them in an excellent summer camp in Quebec where almost no one spoke English. There are many such camps in Quebec, and a complete listing of them is available from CPF-Ontario. The National Office of CPF also has a publication listing summer camps in French in every province of the country. I personally think that the best language experience for the FSL student takes place when the other participants are French first-language children rather than other FSL students, but the choice is yours.

The second excellent language opportunity our children have had has been through SEVEC-sponsored[1] class exchanges between an FSL class and a Francophone class, usually from Quebec. If your school has not participated in one of these exchanges, you could help to organize one for your child's class. CPF has a 'How to' guide available to explain the entire process.

We have also initiated summer exchanges ourselves, either through the Francophone families our children have met while with SEVEC, or through 'friends of friends.' Occasionally, the provincial offices of CPF receive requests from French-speaking families for exchange opportunities with Anglophone students, so you might check with CPF first. In addition, once a student reaches secondary school, there are numerous opportunities to exchange with students in Quebec or Europe for anywhere from two months to a year. The guidance department of your local high school should have this information. So you see, there are many possibilities!

Your children can and will be fluently bilingual if you, their parents, resolve to do three things: get involved with the development, retention, and improvement of your local FSL programs; encourage your children in their FSL programs right through to the end of high school; and provide as many extracurricular opportunities in French as possible for your children. *Bonne chance!*

1 SEVEC is the Society for Educational Visits and Exchanges in Canada, a national, non-profit organization that coordinates educational visits and exchanges for Canadian youth, as well as French immersion courses for Canadian educators.

Franco Fun

Elaine Isabelle

As more and more Canadian children become bilingual, parents are looking for activities which will make French come alive and become something that is enjoyed as well as learned. If French time is fun time, it cannot help but reinforce the learning experience at school. Just as educators have realized that learning **in** the second language is more effective than simply learning the language, parents recognize the importance of having fun in French and of sampling the French cultural heritage via the language.

Many of the best ideas come out of the bag of tricks that creative parents have always used to enrich their children's experience. They happen right at home and many times involve little more than the initiative of thinking of them. Starting in your kitchen, younger children can have hours of fun making scrapbooks using labels from cans and food packages. The brightly colored pictures of fruits, vegetables, and other familiar items with the French label are great fun to clip and paste. You might want to accumulate a few labels before starting this activity, to avoid mystery cans in your pantry. Similarly, if you store foodstuffs in glass jars, it can be fun to tape the French labels to the jars as you fill them: *moitiés de pacanes*, *graines de véritable chocolat*, *poudre pour cossetarde*, and so on. The translation comes with the package and the contents afford instant comprehension.

An excellent principle to bear in mind is that of building on an already established interest. Your budding gourmet cook might enjoy using a French cookbook such as *Les meilleures récettes du Québec* (Mirelle Beaulieu, La Presse) or, simpler still, collecting and trying the recipes in French on cereal and other boxes. Identifying the rows of vegetables in the garden in French using a waterproof marker and wooden sticks is interesting for the child who enjoys helping to plant the family garden. Again, the translation comes right along with the seed package.

Young naturalists will find *Le guide du botaniste amateur*, which is published by the Quebec Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and

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Food, both fascinating and challenging. If animals and their habitat are a particular interest, the collection of twenty-one cards describing *La faune de Québec*, their habitat, reproduction, feeding habits, and natural predators, will bring much pleasure. It is put out by the Ministry of Recreation, Hunting and Fishing, comes in a handy plastic carrying case, and is available for a modest price. Computer buffs will enjoy learning the correct terminology for the world of computers through *Vocabulaire du micro-ordinateur*, which provides an English-French lexicon that is simple, precise, and up-to-date. These and many other Quebec Government publications can be purchased from Publications du Québec, Case postale 1005, Québec, Québec G1K 9Z9. Ask for the catalogue which is available from the same address and browse through it with your child for some fun-filled opportunities.

Wildlife enthusiasts will be interested in the beautiful collection of brochures available from the Canadian Wildlife Service: *La faune de l'arrière pays*. This series now includes over seventy brochures on hinterland wildlife and is available free. Individuals may obtain ten brochures; schools, making their request on the school letterhead, may order the complete series. A catalogue is also available. Send your request to: Canadian Wildlife Service, Environment Canada, Ottawa, Ontario K1A 0H5.

Federal government publications are an excellent source of material, since virtually all are available in French as well as English and they can be ordered right from your own home. What youngster will resist the fascination of the *Trousse des symboles Canadiens*, a kit including the flags, coats of arms, emblems, and other symbols of Canada and the provinces? For the older child who is interested in weather and weather forecasting try *Découvrons la météo*. These and many other titles are available from Supply and Services Canada, Ottawa, Ontario K1A 0S9. Ask for the catalogue, *Titres choisis*.

Among the materials available from Quebec Government Publications, the *Passe-Partout* series is of particular interest to parents of younger children learning French. This educational magazine for French-speaking children aged four to five years complements the television series of the same name. Children of ages six to seven who are learning French would enjoy this magazine whether or not they are able to watch the television show.

Older children (nine to sixteen) who enjoy magazines will love *Vidéo-Presse*, a thoroughly Canadian magazine published ten times a year in Quebec. It features a wide range of articles on geography, sports, science, and much more. As well as providing background information for school projects, it is an excellent source of information on other publications that can be ordered by mail. This magazine contains something for everyone: crossword puzzles, arts and crafts, comics, and a monthly vocabulary test to correct Anglicisms in the French language (*franglais*).

Your favorite word games can be played in French too. Remember the one where the next person must say a word or a country beginning with the last letter of your word? Your favorite word-building games are an added challenge in French, but you should bend the rules and encourage the use of a *dictionnaire*, perhaps a paperback for each player. More advanced players will discover intriguing possibilities as verbs are transformed through various persons and tenses by the addition of letters.

You should also be aware that all of the most popular board games are available in French editions. Playing a well known game in the second language provides a comfortable situation that is not complicated by trying to cope with new rules as well as new words. Your local store should be able to order them for you and they are available from the Sears Christmas catalogue.

Posters, T-shirts, and buttons are always popular but can be more difficult to find in French. Try pasting your own captions or ironing on your favorite messages. Young sailors might enjoy *A pleines voiles!* (Full sails ahead!) Teenagers would enjoy *Lâche pas!* (Hang in there!) Some others you might enjoy:

Ne vous gênez pas, faites comme chez vous!
(Don't be shy, make yourselves at home!)

Une joie partagée est doublée! (A shared joy is doubled!)

Nous autres, on joue dehors! (We're for the outdoors!)

Le français, je le parle par coeur! (I speak French by heart!)

The Office of the Commissioner of Official Languages has a number of informative and entertaining materials available free of charge for Canadians exploring the world of languages. These include *Oh! Canada 2*, a delightful kit designed to help children get to know

and enjoy Canada's two official languages; a series of very attractive bilingual posters; and a wall map showing the languages of the world. To request these materials or a listing of all items available write to Communications Branch, Office of the Commissioner of Official Languages, Ottawa, Ontario K1A 0T8.

Stores which have outlets across Canada and publish catalogues normally have those catalogues available in French. These catalogues are excellent sources of up-to-date vocabulary. You can ask your local outlet to get you the French edition or provide the address to which you can write to obtain it. You should not expect to receive two copies of the same catalogue if it is complimentary, so pass this up if you cannot manage to use the French edition.

Many Canadian communities now have French radio and television, which can provide significant exposure to the French language and culture. Wise parents will be selective and realize that a program which they consider unsuitable in English does not improve with dubbing. However, the programming conceived in French for young children is generally of good quality and should not be a problem. If you usually have the radio on in your kitchen for background music, try switching from time to time to the French language band for variety and to tune your ear and that of your child to the range of sounds which this language uses. Interested parents should consult their local listings for possible choices. If you are keen to research and exploit this opportunity you could cooperate with other parents to monitor local offerings and prepare a list of recommended programs.

Remember too that a young hockey or baseball fan will find the French coverage of games 'neat' if not 'awesome.' It will also widen the choices available. A dubbed American film which your children enjoyed in English can also be fun and provide a higher comfort level than a totally new film. Coverage of national and international events is a great time to switch channels and compare the English and French coverage or listen to the speaker directly, rather than to the simultaneous translation.

If your family enjoys singing in the car or at the campfire you might add a couple of French songs to your repertoire. For a handy ring-bound book of one hundred all-time favorites, try: *Les 100 plus belles chansons*. This convenient little manual features the words and music for one hundred of the most popular songs from a

collection of over five hundred published in the collection *La Bonne Chanson* by Entreprises Culturelles Enr. of La Prairie, Québec.

When we look to the community for possible sources of extracurricular enrichment, the possibilities are as many and varied as the populations they serve. If you live near a Francophone community, it may have a French cultural centre. It is well to remember that these centres exist to respond to the needs of French-speaking people, and care should be taken not to interfere with their primary *raison d'être*. They may however provide bookstores, libraries, and cultural presentations for which your patronage may indeed provide a broader base of support. When it comes to activities and workshops for children, do remember that your child should be sufficiently fluent in French to fit into the situation without disturbing the ambience so necessary to such centres. Sensitivity on your part in this matter might perhaps lead to arrangements whereby activities could be organized specifically for English children learning French.

Publicly funded agencies exist mainly to meet your needs. In general, they are quite responsive to their taxpayers. For example, a growing number of public libraries across Canada have French books and materials as well as activities in French such as story hours, films, and guest musicians. The initiation or the expansion of such services could depend on your parent group letting the library board know that such services are wanted and would be patronized. Similarly, municipal recreation departments can be encouraged to offer some of their courses in French where demand warrants it. Start by finding out how programming decisions are made and how you as a taxpayer can contribute to the planning process. Don't hesitate to offer advice and be prepared to help on a volunteer basis if you are serious about effecting change in your community.

Local CPF chapters provide many volunteer-organized French language activities for children. Details on CPF-organized activities can be found in the articles in this volume by Kathryn Manzer, Deborah Whale, Hildi Konok, and Laura Van Loon and Marjorie Scharf.

Many school boards offer after-school and summer programs. If these do not include any activities which support the second-language courses in your school, you may want to suggest that

some be added. This could include providing some of the existing activities in the French language or introducing some new offerings. Similarly, if your local community college, university, YM-YWCA, or church are currently involved in any programming for children, they might be responsive to an expressed desire for activities in French.

The ideas suggested in this article are intended to stimulate your own imagination. They are necessarily general in nature and leave much of the real research to you. Approach any activities with gentle persuasion, encouragement, and support which is geared to the receptivity of your child. Most important of all, have fun with your child learning French!

Learning French through Music

Suzanne Pinel

Frère Jacques, Frère Jacques
Dormez-vous, dormez-vous
Sonnez les matines, sonnez les matines
Din din don, din din don

If we had to choose a theme song for Francophones and Francophiles the world over, *Frère Jacques* would win hands down. For most of us, this well-known melody brings back wonderful childhood memories of singing and enjoying ourselves. Most of us probably did not realize at the time that we were in an 'educational' environment learning one of the world's most widely-known languages. By its nature 'music,' and more specifically 'songs,' make learning the French language as easy and pleasant as playing a game.

In order to motivate anyone, child or adult, to want to learn a new skill, one starts with a known element. Music is an ideal vehicle since hearing is the first of the senses to develop, and a child is naturally interested in rhythm and musical sounds. Songs become the known element on which to build the learning process. Music sets a natural, comfortable atmosphere in which learning becomes child's play. When work becomes play, the age of the learner becomes irrelevant since he or she will want to repeat the experience.

Yet to learn and to master a given subject, repetition is also necessary. Songs can relieve the tedium associated with repetitive skills. One has only to think of how effortlessly we hum the commercial jingles heard on radio and television. French students will do the same with the songs they learn in school. The practice of spoken French is therefore not limited to the classroom, but extends into extracurricular life. The intellectual and sensory learning process is an ongoing one, whether the students are in or out of the classroom setting.

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Let us examine more closely the linguistic advantages of using songs in the learning process. Songs encourage the acquisition of spoken French because they develop aural and oral skills. When a child hears a song, he or she listens to it, takes it in, and very often repeats it spontaneously. In language learning, the key to success is the development of good aural skills. Songs develop auditory perception because they make the ear sensitive to French sounds: to those that rhyme, to those that are soft, hard, low, high, and so forth. Songs also encourage auditory discrimination. However, to ensure the successful development of this skill, it is extremely important that the singer's pronunciation be impeccable. The child must be able to distinguish the many sounds and words of what is being sung. Otherwise, the purpose for the song may be lost and the results of the learning process may be disappointing.

Aural comprehension is a most important initial step in language acquisition. This is achieved through the use of mime, gestures, sign language, and pictures to convey the meaning of the song. The ideas and images expressed become meaningful, almost tangible. Language comes alive! Through imitation, the child grasps the general meaning; he or she will remember the words more easily because of the techniques of mime and gestures. Moreover, the song becomes more interesting when the words are associated with a particular illustration or gesture. Being able to move about and to sing means that the child is more relaxed and in a better frame of mind to assimilate new material. The child is most likely to remember the sounds and the words perceived, discriminated, sorted out, and understood if he or she is enjoying the exercise. Auditory retention is reinforced through repetition of the song over a period of time.

Songs also allow vocabulary enrichment and the reinforcement of given themes and concepts. By the time the child is ready to speak, he will already have accumulated quite a bit of French vocabulary. Once the auditory skills are honed, the child can move on to oral skills and sing the songs alone.

Children learn through repetition. For this reason, songs hold a special place because they are so enjoyable. Repetition of a French song gives the child an opportunity to pronounce sounds that do not exist in the English language – nasal vowels, rounded anterior vowels, and some of the consonants that are pronounced differently in French – and always in an interesting context, unlike the monotonous 'drill-and-kill' type of repetition.

Authors, composers, *chansonniers,* and specialists in children's entertainment try to integrate these elements in the songs they prepare for didactic purposes. But even the traditional lullaby, *Au Clair de la Lune*, contains many of the sounds 'r' and 'u.' These sounds must be practiced and mastered by students of French in order for their second-language skills to be pleasing to the ear and satisfying to use in a real-life situation.

Anglophone students tend to use the tonic accent of their mother tongue in pronouncing French. Songs allow the students to learn in an almost unconscious manner where to place the accent when speaking, since the students will have heard it many times in a recognizable context. They will also adapt their auditory capacities to the intonation of French and be able to imitate this and express themselves in a variety of contexts where different tonalities are expected. The natural rhythm of songs closely approximates spoken French. Students therefore sing songs at a normal rate of speech. Since we have demonstrated that the song easily develops aural and oral acquisition of sound, intonation, structures, and vocabulary, it follows that it can also be used in the elaboration of any theme that is to be taught.

Second-language learning opens up a whole new world for the student, offering not only linguistic advantages but also cultural enrichment. The song then has an even more important role since it is a vehicle both for language and for culture. Songs and singing have always held a special place in French Canadian society. Through traditional folk songs, students can discover and better understand the way of life, the history, and the feelings and emotions of French Canadians.

The past decade has seen the appearance of many composers and singers of children's songs. There are cassettes, records, and compact discs available for purchase. French teachers can suggest artists whose music is being used in the classroom to reinforce the joy of learning. Such songs allow students to share their knowledge and show off their ability to sing and to speak. It is a good idea to have a selection of these recordings at home so that your children can choose to listen to them whenever they are in the mood. Since the advent of tape decks in automobiles, a family trip has the potential of becoming a cultural experience or a sing-along of songs learned in French class. By listening to a variety of singers, students will become accustomed to the different accents and dialects

and further develop discriminatory and auditory skills. The horizons of the Francophone world widen with the lyrics of new tunes.

Music is an integral part of everyday life. Teaching specialists recognize the importance of songs in second-language acquisition. By giving our children an opportunity to listen to and to sing songs in French, we give them a setting full of wonders and joy in which they can develop second-language skills beyond our wildest expectations, and all this in a relaxed, happy, and entertaining atmosphere.

What more could we want for our children? Music is the international language!

The Point of View of a Francophone outside Quebec

Jacqueline Neatby

Throughout Canada many English-speaking parents want their children to acquire French as a second language and to have a chance to get acquainted with the history and culture of French-speaking Canadians. Attendance at a school which offers French immersion is seen by many as the most effective way of achieving this goal. Since French-speaking Canadians also want French language schools, these same English-speaking parents sometimes conclude that both groups and the country would benefit if they joined forces to obtain such schools or shared those which already exist.

French-speaking Canadians outside Quebec are heartened by the interest in their language, history, and culture, and they support the very successful country-wide growth of immersion programs, but they also have strong apprehensions. Some English-speaking parents want to make one type of school serve the two official language groups. The problem, as French Canadians see it, is that one school cannot serve two masters. A school which effectively teaches French to English-speaking children cannot provide the kind of education which French-speaking Canadians need.

Immersion programs have proved that they can graduate students who are functionally competent in French, are less ethnocentric, and have a positive attitude towards French-speaking Canadians. At the same time, these programs enable their graduates to be as proficient in English as those of regular programs, which is also important to English-speaking parents. It must be remembered that immersion in French is far from total, in the sense that a significant proportion of instruction is given in English. This helps to make English secure, as does the fact that the home language itself remains English. The main basis for that security, however, is that the linguistic milieu outside Quebec is

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almost always a form of English immersion. Research has shown that graduates of immersion programs remain and perceive themselves as 'Anglophone Canadians'; that is, they identify with the English language community and will be able to contribute to its creativity and vitality. Basically, English-speaking parents want a school which will teach their children a new skill – a second language – and not a school which will transform them into 'Francophone Canadians.'

French-speaking Canadians, on the other hand, want a French language school which will graduate 'Francophone Canadians,' that is, persons who are proficient in French and English and who can identify with the French-speaking community and contribute to its creativity and vitality. To understand the kind of school which can meet their needs, it is necessary to understand how living in a milieu which is linguistically and culturally English affects this objective. For French-speaking Canadians, learning English, their second language, is relatively easy because generally it permeates the very air they breathe. But French, their first language, is consistently threatened and often totally engulfed by the overwhelming presence of English. Hence, they find themselves constantly struggling to protect their mother tongue against the pressure of the majority language. The high assimilation rate of Francophones outside Quebec is proof that the struggle is real.

The pressures of the English language are powerful outside Quebec even in communities where French-speaking Canadians may be a majority. Many of the institutions central to every citizen's security and well-being require a knowledge of the majority language. This is true even in New Brunswick and Ontario where provincial governments have undertaken to give institutional support to French language services. More often than not, health services diagnose and prescribe in English; social welfare agencies dispense their aid in English; and courts interpret the law in English. Whether sitting in a restaurant, taking a bus, or asking directions, a French-speaking Canadian outside Quebec is more likely to get an answer if he asks in English. Almost everywhere English is the language of the workplace and French-speaking Canadians are driven to learn it by the most powerful of incentives, the need to earn their daily bread. English is not only the dominant language, it is also the more prestigious. For many French-speaking Canadians outside Quebec, authority speaks English while poverty speaks French. Their mother tongue is often rebuffed

and it becomes less wearing to adopt English as a language of communication.

In such an environment French-speaking Canadians find it difficult to maintain their French, and for children it is difficult to learn it well. Learning it at home as their mother tongue is not enough. Language must develop as a child grows, because as children acquire a wider range of experiences and more sophisticated ideas they must develop the vocabulary and the syntax to put their thoughts and feelings into words. The language of a child in the mouth of an adult is little better than baby talk. To learn the language well requires a milieu where French is the language of communication and where it is taught at the level of the child's intellectual development.

For French-speaking Canadians outside Quebec, the school is the most important institution besides the home in terms of creating a French milieu. This is why they have always attached so much importance to their schools. Without these schools no French language community outside Quebec would have survived. It is important that English-speaking Canadians understand the importance of these schools and their distinctive features.

French-speaking parents outside Quebec want a school which will enable their children to become proficient in French, their first language, and to master English, their second language. To this extent, they resemble English-speaking parents who also want their children to be bilingual. For French-speaking Canadians, however, the road to bilingualism is very different. They clearly need a French language school where English is taught as a subject and where French is the language of instruction for all other subjects throughout their primary and secondary schooling. It has been demonstrated that they can thereby also achieve a competence in English which is comparable to that of students in English language schools. Immersion in their second language, English, takes place outside the school. However, immersion in their first language, French, is crucial in school. Not all English-speaking parents or students want to have that much instruction time in French by the end of secondary school. In immersion programs across the country, instruction time in French varies, depending on the type of program and grade level. French-speaking students need to have much more instruction time in French than immersion programs typically provide.

Nevertheless, some English-speaking parents are willing to enrol their children in schools designed for French language children. What happens when English-speaking children are admitted to these schools? The most obvious difficulties arise in the teaching of French and English as subjects. Obviously, these languages should be taught differently to French-speaking and English-speaking children who begin school with such different language backgrounds. The teaching of other subjects is also affected by the presence of too many Anglophone students. The teacher is not able to ignore their difficulties with the language. For academic reasons alone, English-speaking students should only be admitted to regular French language classrooms after they have acquired sufficient knowledge of French. Even then, their cultural backgrounds impose some constraints on the teacher. For example, a teacher may hesitate to assign a project which presupposes easy access to French language daily newspapers. It is difficult to design projects for students whose homes reflect the resources of different cultural groups. In such a situation, the tendency is to avoid the problem by making limited demands, thus lowering the academic standards of the entire class.

Through experience with immersion programs as well as the experience of teaching immigrants in either of the official languages, Canadians are learning a great deal about second-language teaching and the teaching of cultural minorities. It is clear that an entirely different approach is needed, involving special qualifications for the teachers, and separate curricula, textbooks, and teaching aids. Teachers do not simply teach a language, they teach a student, and this student comes to the classroom with his own language and culture and his own purpose for learning. This experience should make it easier for Canadians to understand why it is difficult to teach English-speaking and French-speaking students in the same classroom.

Above all, it must be remembered that French-speaking students need a school milieu which reinforces and strengthens their language and their cultural identity. A school is more than the sum of its classrooms. The language of the halls, playgrounds, and school clubs is also vitally important. Experience shows that Anglophone children in French language schools are likely to revert to English outside the classroom even when they are admirably competent in French. Neither school regulations nor parental pleading can stop

them. In such circumstances, the Francophone children are likely to adopt the dominant language and hence spend a good part of their time at school speaking English. If a significant number of Anglophones are present in a French language school – as few as one quarter – English displaces French almost completely. The school as a French milieu is thereby unintentionally subverted.

From a Francophone point of view, the ideal arrangement is to have two types of schools, ones which offer French to meet the needs of Anglophone students and French language ones to meet the needs of French-speaking students. It is heartening to know that Canadian Parents for French shares these views and has publicly supported them. This organization can take credit for encouraging school boards to introduce immersion programs at the elementary level in every province as well as for advocating the continuation of French immersion in English language secondary schools. Similarly, French-speaking parents outside Quebec want instruction in French at all levels but they want it in homogeneous institutions which they can manage. For them, reality falls far short of their demands.

French-speaking parents outside Quebec hope that Section 23 of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, which guarantees minority language educational rights, will eventually enable them to obtain the kind of schools they need at the primary and secondary level throughout Canada. The implementation of Section 23 is not easy. Several lawsuits have been filed in various provinces over the last six years to determine its meaning and to establish its implications. The Supreme Court will soon rule on some of the important principles arising from the judgements of provincial courts. However, it seems clear that the ways and means of implementing these judgements will have to be determined by provincial governments. Francophone associations in every province are in the process of submitting plans to their respective provincial governments. As it is, many Francophone children eligible under the Charter still do not have access to appropriate French language schools.

In Ontario and New Brunswick, the ideal of homogeneous French language schools has been attained in many areas. Elsewhere in Canada, the situation is more complex. In some communities it may not even be possible to regroup enough eligible children to sustain a modern system of primary and secondary

education. The availability of teachers qualified to teach French as a subject and to teach a wide range of subjects in French, as well as the cost of physical facilities, are additional constraints. Nevertheless, there is no doubt that much more could be done. In these areas, where typically access is not being provided, French-speaking Canadians will be strongly tempted to ask for French language schools of their own, because it is in areas where they are a minority that the need to ensure their survival is the greatest.

In areas where the French-speaking population cannot sustain homogeneous French language schools, particularly at the secondary level, some collaboration should be possible with English-speaking parents who want their children to learn French. Satisfactory cooperation, however, requires that both groups begin with a clear understanding of each other's distinctive needs and aspirations. Here, Canadian Parents for French and *la Fédération des francophones hors Québec* could play an educative role. Cooperation between the two linguistic groups could also influence provincial governments to make their education laws conform to Section 23 of the Charter.

English-speaking Canadians also need to realize that for French-speaking Canadians outside Quebec, French language schools are only part of the story. Their survival depends on the viability of French language communities which belong in the twentieth century, and not the quaint, stultifying enclaves of a folkloric society. To make survival possible, French must be a living language outside the home and classroom. The high assimilation rates of French-speaking Canadians outside Quebec, and the extinction of many of their communities, convinced many French Canadians in the 1960s and 1970s that only in Quebec could there be a safe and viable French language community, and not a very safe one at that, unless Quebec took complete control of its own destiny. The separatist movement was a consequence of this conviction.

To reverse the assimilation rate, and hence challenge the separatist contention, the federal government implemented policies in the 1970s and 1980s which would give French-speaking Canadians outside Quebec the institutional and public support to live in French in many of the important activities of their lives. It guaranteed that federal services would be available in French across the country. New Brunswick also declared itself officially bilingual in 1969 and, by subscribing in 1982 to Sections 16 to 20 of the

Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, gave a constitutional guarantee to government services in French. In 1986, Ontario passed the Law on French Language Services, which assured its citizens that all government services would be available in French by November 1989 in twenty-two designated areas. Who would have predicted some twenty years ago that this would have been possible in two of the most Loyalist provinces in Canada?

In the course of achieving these goals there will be complications and frustrations. However, we need to see these developments in a broader context. These various measures are designed to provide the institutional support which will make it possible for French language communities outside Quebec to survive. Other provinces might learn from them the importance of doing likewise in ways which fit their means and circumstances.

What relevance does this have for English-speaking parents who want their children to learn French? Some of these parents are committed to the ideal of a Canada of two official languages, convinced that this linguistic duality enriches our national life. Others may be less enthusiastic about linguistic duality but admit that the French fact is here to stay and have decided to accept this reality. In either case, these parents want to prepare their children to benefit from the duality of Canada and to live their lives in a country which extends from sea to sea.

French-speaking Canadians outside Quebec also want this vision of Canada to become a reality. However, if their communities cannot survive, linguistic duality will become more and more a duality of two territorial solitudes, Quebec and Canada outside Quebec. For this reason it is important that English-speaking parents understand – and support – the French language schools and the French language services which make these French-speaking communities outside Quebec creative sources of life in one of our official languages, all across Canada.

Very good, Mr. Bilingualism. You just promised him a motorcycle for his fourteenth birthday.
FRENCH
BOOTHROYD

Preschoolers Enjoy Learning French Too!

Deanna Cazes

Parents today are picking up the bilingual options being offered at the preschool level. With the steadily increasing demand across Canada for the early and late immersion programs in public and private schools, the spread of bilingual preschools was inevitable. In the area known as 'the lower mainland' surrounding Vancouver there are a large number of French preschools and daycare centres. The story of the whys and wherefores of the Burnaby French Language Playschool is not unique. Today, more and more three-year-olds and four-year-olds in this country are learning a second language in an immersion-like setting that little children find fun.

Background

The Burnaby French Language Playschool (BFLP), established in 1975, predates both French immersion in the school district and the beginning of Canadian Parents for French. In its first fifteen years, the BFLP built up a solid reputation in the community. One of this preschool's registrars, Nicola Valentine, attests to this reputation: she says that she felt 'uncommitted about placing my child in French immersion but ... the (BFLP) preschool was the best of the ones I saw in Burnaby at the time.' Since then, a second French preschool has begun in Burnaby, the 'French for Kids Preschool.' Both offer the whole gamut of a rich preschool experience and the added advantage of an introduction to a second language and culture in an attractive and child-friendly environment.

Licensing

In the province of British Columbia, child care programs must meet the regulations set by the Provincial Child Care Facilities Licensing

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Board of the Ministry of Health. Nursery schools and preschools serve children from thirty-two months (three years old by December 31) up to school entry. Such schools offer part-day programs. They have a maximum group size of twenty children with a staff/child ratio of one trained supervisor and assistant per twenty children. Staff training is in Early Childhood Education. Children are grouped, with separate sessions for three-year-olds and four-year-olds.

Administration

The day to day and month to month operation of the BFLP is administered by an elected board of directors. They are responsible for overseeing registration, publicity, hiring, supplies, equipment, and finances. The board meets monthly with the teachers and the general membership. The board is aware that the benefit of learning a second language is not enough by itself to recommend a French preschool, and they have worked together to make the BFLP a well run facility which can successfully compete on its general merits.

Teachers

The teachers in a French preschool must speak French fluently. Candidates for teaching positions in a French preschool must also have the necessary courses in Early Childhood Education and be certified in British Columbia. Prospective teachers from outside the province may have to retrain to receive certification. The Provincial Child Care Facilities Licensing Board and the Ministry of Health determine suitability when there is a question.

The teachers design, teach, and control the curriculum and program. The supervisory teacher is responsible for the classroom domain, and the assistant teacher works closely with her. Parent helpers take their cue from the teaching staff and enjoy learning songs and vocabulary with their children. Many reference sheets have been prepared for the use of parents assisting in the preschool.

Parents

The BFLP, as a partial parent-participation school, invites mothers or fathers to do one duty day every six weeks. Most parents of children in the BFLP are English-speaking. They unanimously agree that their role as classroom helpers is a desirable feature of the preschool. They help the staff by setting out and tidying up equipment, dressing and undressing children for outdoors, preparing the snack, taking children to the bathroom, and so on. They observe, play with, and encourage the children. Each parent's own child is always very proud to have Mummy or Daddy there.

Child-Centered Program

In a classroom at Marlborough Elementary School, BFLP preschoolers play with blocks, puzzles, dolls, cars, and playdough. They also dress up, play house, and paint at easels, seemingly unaware that they are building up basic vocabulary in a second language. The French that was taught at your mother's knee, if you had a French-speaking mother, is now taught by a preschool teacher through songs, rhymes, stories, and interaction. During a typical day, the children have a period of free play during which they can choose from a variety of activities which should be made available in any well-designed nursery school program. At 'circle time' the children gather on a large rug for French songs, stories, and finger play. Following this, there is a craft activity to do, and number and colour concepts and days of the week to learn. Everything is related to a monthly theme. During the session there is also a quiet time to stretch out and listen to French records, to have a snack together, and to play in the fresh air. In this way, the preschool contributes to the small-muscle and large-muscle coordination and to the emotional, social, and intellectual development of the child.

The local Burnaby libraries have been very cooperative in having puppet shows and films in French. In addition, each month an excursion is organized which usually emphasizes the monthly theme; frequently, a bilingual guide is arranged. On these excursions all the teaching and learning are done through direct contact and first-hand experience. Preschoolers do not rely on the cumbersome method of translation. To go to a farm, the firehall, or the aquarium is to experience the real world and connect it to the French vocabulary they are learning. There is nothing as vivid as

une vache when you are a three-year-old standing right next to one – especially when she moos. But don't expect miracles. Children hear first, understand second, and speak third. It is a process. Preschool is just the beginning.

A French preschool offers children a wide and varied program designed and suited to the particular interests and capabilities of young children. They accept French naturally in this environment and find it fun. Parents should also act naturally and should be relaxed about the experience and, especially, should be positive in their associations with the teachers. Children form their own opinions about the language and the people who speak the language from first-hand encounters. A significant side effect of learning a second language is that it breaks down the barriers of prejudice and builds bridges of understanding.

Motivation

English-speaking parents cite a number of reasons for registering their children in a French preschool. Some wish to expose their child to another language. Others want to assess their child's suitability for French immersion later. Some stress the greater job opportunities available to bilingual people. Others refer to Canadian unity. Some indicate that their older children are already in a French immersion program. Still others indicate that the French preschool is the best one in the area. Of course, some parents mention more than one of these reasons.

While agreeing on the quality of the preschool, French-speaking parents report different motives. Some indicate a desire to maintain and reinforce their own heritage and to expand contacts with French outside the home. Others mention the opportunity for their children to learn to cooperate with other children.

The Gift of a Second Language

Through French immersion education programs, English-speaking parents are able to give their children the gift of a second language. French immersion has become the great Canadian success story in education today. If it is so successful, why wait until kindergarten to begin? When languages are learned early, the most native-like pronunciation can be achieved. With the mountain of research on

immersion, parents have come to believe that children truly can attain a high degree of fluency in a second language without any negative effect on their first language. Indeed, learning a second language appears to enhance mother tongue skills.

For most unilingual English-speaking families, the only effective way of producing a bilingual child is through school. With French available in a quality preschool, parents are giving children a good start. School boards provide a proven, viable follow-up within the public school system and are graduating students who have many doors open to them because of their bilingual ability.

My husband and I are happy that we were instrumental in enabling our three children to have the opportunity to learn French in preschool and later in French immersion. There is a great deal of satisfaction in knowing that they have grown up unable to remember a time when they did not know both of Canada's official languages.

The Young Child's View of Starting French Immersion

Sandra Weber and Claudette Tardif

Introduction

The young child beginning a French immersion program in kindergarten or Grade 1 must cope not only with the new experience of formal schooling, but also with a second-language environment, one in which the teacher does not speak often in the more comfortable words of the child's first language. Some educators and parents have questioned the value of early immersion, concerned that the experience could be unduly stressful for young children. Our preliminary investigation of this experience from the child's point of view gives us reason to be optimistic.

Although researchers have learned much about the effects of French immersion schooling on children's academic skills (see, for example, Genesee 1985), we have only begun to examine just what actually goes on in immersion classrooms. We need to know more about the nature of the immersion experience, especially from the child's point of view. What is the child's first experience of French immersion schooling? How do children react and adapt to the 'strange' environment of schooling in a second language? What strategies do they use to make sense of what goes on? How do they come to understand the teacher? These are the kinds of questions we and other researchers are beginning to ask. This article will describe selected findings from a two-year ethnographic study which investigates the child's experience of French immersion kindergarten.[1]

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1 An ethnographic study is a detailed description and analysis of a particular culture.

Overview of the Study

Using a variety of data gathering techniques including extensive classroom observations and field notes, audio and video recordings, and interviews with the children that incorporated the use of a shy, three-and-a-half year old puppet as 'co-interviewer,' we closely followed children in four French immersion kindergartens. Some of these children were observed the following year in one Grade 1 class. In order to document the children's initial contact with immersion schooling, filming and observations began on the very first day of school.

In addition to the four classes indicated, two regular English kindergartens were observed and video-recorded over a six-week period to provide additional data, insight, and perspectives for a more valid interpretation of the immersion experience. We have thus gathered detailed portraits of how six kindergartens and one Grade 1 began a school year.

Adapting to the Immersion Situation

During the first days of school, we carefully observed both the regular and immersion students with some of parents' most often-voiced concerns in mind. However, contrary to our expectations, the second-language element did not really seem to be a major source of frustration or difficulty for the children. The video recordings and interviews clearly show that the children were able to construct much meaning from the immersion situation even at the beginning of the year. Most of the time they responded appropriately and did not exhibit inordinate confusion. We were very surprised at just how easily the children adapted to the situation – with very few tears, very little fuss, and with lots of smiles and enthusiasm despite an obvious initial shyness in some of the children. If anything, it was the school-specific rather than the language-specific aspects of the classroom experience that seemed to pose a challenge to some of the children: separating from parents, getting used to the concept of recess (not going home), learning the classroom rules about how to behave, adjusting to the demands of an unfamiliar schedule and way of doing things – these seemed to be the real challenges in both the regular and the immersion classrooms. Although we cannot generalize to all situations because our sample of classrooms is small, it is still noteworthy that we could not find

any evidence to support the hypothesis that beginning immersion kindergarten is more stressful for children than beginning regular kindergarten.

The fact that not understanding the teacher's language seemed to be only a minor nuisance to the children could indicate that children are more tolerant of ambiguity than are adults. Even in their first language, young children are accustomed to not understanding everything adults say. In addition, they do not feel as socially awkward about not understanding as adults might in a similar situation, nor are they as reluctant to ask for help. Not knowing everything, relying on adults, and asking lots of questions are part of the socially accepted role of being a child. Research (for example, Gardner and Lambert 1972; Krashen 1982) has indicated that social and psychological factors can play an important role in the acquisition of a second language. Perhaps, as adults, we project our own fears of a second-language learning situation onto children without stopping to ask if children experience things socially in a different manner than we do.

Although the beginning immersion kindergarten students were able to tell us that they were in **French** kindergarten and that they were there to learn French, in their moment-to-moment activities and talk they did not seem very preoccupied with questions of learning a second language. They were intent on more immediate goals, such as learning the ropes of classroom survival and being allowed to play with certain people and things. At the beginning of the year, the immersion kindergarten children often told us that they didn't understand **French**, but they were adamant in asserting that they **did** understand the **teacher**, who spoke almost exclusively in French. In describing kindergarten to our puppet, the children said things like: 'It's fun'; 'You play and you learn'; 'We make things'; 'You have to do what Teacher tells you to do and you have to do your work.' Some of the children seemed to take special delight in learning a language that their parents didn't understand. For most of the immersion students, the second-language feature quickly became a natural, normal aspect of classroom life, something they just took for granted.

The Nature of Sense-making in Immersion Classrooms

The nature of activity in all types of classrooms is often highly ritualistic, with underlying game rules and fixed participation patterns guiding the interaction. In each of the immersion kindergartens, there was the familiar sequence (all conducted in French) of the *bonjour* ritual, the calendar and temperature routines, and the collective activity of circle time which involved many songs and much story-telling, with elaborate gestures or colourful images to accompany the French words. The children would pay very close attention, intent on understanding what Teacher meant, often seeming fascinated by what was going on. Initially, they would silently mouth many of the words to Teacher's songs and tentatively try out the gestures, their eyes fixed all the while on Teacher or on another child who seemed to know what to do. Within days, the quality of their participation improved immensely as they sang the words with gusto, using the gestures with ease.

The kindergarten programs also included a great deal of fine-motor activity and work in playcentres that incorporated mathematics, art, science, and literacy activities as well as role-playing. In general, these activities focused on the same kinds of themes and concepts that we observed in the regular English kindergartens, including health and hygiene, family and community, transportation, plants and animals, and seasons and holidays. The immersion kindergarten programs also included stories, holidays, and certain practices which reflect some aspects of French-Canadian culture.

The immersion kindergarten teachers in this study did not demand that the children always speak French although they did encourage the children gradually to model certain key French phrases and use them. The teachers allowed the children to initiate conversation and make comments in English, especially during the first half of the year; however, expectations were higher concerning the children's use of French in Grade 1. The teachers reacted to each child's English communication by responding in French, often echoing and extending what the child had said in order to provide a model for the child in French and also to encourage further elaboration from the child. During their play time with each other and in their conversations with the teacher, many of the children gradually and spontaneously began incorporating French words and phrases into their English talk as the year progressed. This is an

important and normal step in second-language acquisition for young children.

Sense-making Strategies Used by the Children

Although the children did learn the precise meaning of many specific French words and phrases, our analysis of interview material and classroom dialogue suggests that the children derived their initial understanding of Teacher's French not so much from words as from specific contexts and from the paralinguistic features of Teacher's communication. In other words, the children did not need to understand every word spoken by the teacher. They could rely for help on the 'scaffolding of meaning' (Bruner 1975) provided by Teacher's paralanguage (gestures, body movement, intonation, and expression) and by concrete materials, pictures, symbols, and rituals. The **way** the teachers spoke and organized the situation was just as important as **what** they said in getting the message across. For example, a low table set with four placemats, cutlery, glasses, food, and drink extends an invitation to four children to sit down and eat even if they do not understand the accompanying French input. We have frequently observed children actively searching for meaning in the arrangement and the design of materials and we have seen teachers carefully orchestrating things so that the 'situation speaks for itself.'

To understand what was going on and to make sense of the 'strange' things the teacher was saying, the children used a variety of additional strategies. For example, they noticed the resemblance of certain French and English words. Many children seemed to take considerable pride and delight in spontaneously proclaiming aloud to anyone at hand their latest discovery of a connection, for example, '*Banane* – banana.' The children also drew on their past experience and the shared culture of childhood to make sense of what was going on, drawing on such things as their prior knowledge of many of the fairy tales, songs, games, and materials used by the teacher. In addition, the children relied heavily on the highly structured and routine nature of classroom life to facilitate their understanding of the ongoing situation. They expected school to be the same each day, making it easier to predict and understand what was happening. The English regular kindergartens, too, were highly routinized, a characteristic, in fact, of all grade levels.

After sizing up the situation, the children often acted or spoke to verify their interpretation, responding appropriately in terms of what they had understood or calling out their English interpretation to see what effect it produced, as in the following example:

Teacher: *Nous allons au gymnase maintenant.*

Mary: Are we going to the gym now?

The teachers told us that this strategy made it easier for them to communicate with the children without resorting to English; one child or another would be bound to understand or at least guess what was going on, opening the way for further confirmation or help from the teacher. Making sense of what is going on in the classroom is often very much a collective process. Meaning is continually being reinterpreted and renegotiated with the teacher, between small groups of children, and amongst the larger group. The children are in this boat of second language together. We found that they look to each other for help and clues almost as often as they look to the teacher.

When all else failed, the children simply asked the teacher for clarification. The teacher then usually explained again in French, often with some gesture or new expression. In most cases, this seemed to suffice, as in the following example.

Context – A teacher is reading a story from a large picture book.

Teacher: *Un jour, Sara descendait l'escalier* (One day, Sara was going down the stairs).

Child: What does that mean?

Teacher: Points to Sara in the picture and with fingers makes a walking-down-the-stairs kind of motion while repeating in French what she had said.

Child: Oh, she's going down the stairs.

This example also illustrates how the children can combine the strategy of questioning with the strategy of reading nonverbal clues.

During interviews with the children and teachers, we learned that many people are aware, to some extent, of the strategies they use; that is, some of the strategies become consciously used tactics. Many of the children, for example, offered the following explanations of how they came to understand the teacher's French: 'I just listen very hard and my brain figures it out'; 'I think of a word in English it sounds like'; and 'I ask the teacher.'

The process of second-language learning, however, is almost peripheral to the more central process of socialization to school life, especially at the kindergarten level. This is not to say that the children did not learn French – indeed we were impressed by their rapid progress – but rather that their perceptions of kindergarten and the focus of their behaviour centered on adapting to the demands of school life. Thus far, we have identified very few major differences between the demands and the structure of immersion kindergartens in comparison with the first language kindergartens that we have filmed. We believe that the importance of paralanguage and rituals, the structure of classroom experience, and the various other ways in which teachers and children find and construct meaning in the early grades of all types of programs have been understudied and underestimated. We will continue to investigate these features of what actually goes on in the classroom.

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Secondary Immersion: a Manitoba Solution

Linda Asper

I would like to share with you my ideas on several aspects of the implementation of a particular secondary French immersion program in Manitoba. These include: the philosophy of education underlying the approach taken at a specific secondary French immersion school; the curriculum offered; the significance of parental involvement, student activities, and support services; areas requiring improvement; and specific issues that need to be addressed.

Parents and educators working together to bring their vision of secondary immersion education to a reality are coping with various factors that affect the outcome – dwindling budgets, school closures, demographic shifts, student population, staff transfers, court decisions, and a dynamic local and national political climate. To initiate and implement a secondary French immersion program in that context requires a thorough understanding of change, school 'culture' (school organization and ambience), effective leadership, research on immersion, and community power structures. It also means that French immersion leaders must be risk-takers who enjoy life in a goldfish bowl. As they work towards their overall goal, they must take steps to actualize their vision of secondary French immersion, making it public, developing strategies, and mobilizing people (Shieve and Schoenheit 1987).

In 1982, when a Manitoba urban school division was faced with housing 108 Grade 7, 8, and 9 early French immersion students in a secondary setting, it made its decisions on the basis of three assumptions: program growth was inevitable; additional facilities were not available; and there existed the political will for a single immersion centre. Criteria flowing from these basic assumptions included the provision of a location and setting favourable to the success of the secondary French immersion program; making good use of space available in the school division; minimizing disruption

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for all parents and students; controlling additional costs, including transportation costs; and finding a solution which would be viable over both the short and long term. Because French immersion parents had the prior experience of two elementary immersion centres, they demanded in all their submissions to the school board a secondary immersion centre with a distinct student body, administration, program, and teaching staff, as well as a French-only environment. Although their goal was to have a French immersion secondary school, it was recognized that, in the short term, it might be

necessary to have a location within an existing school, operating within its own physical boundaries.

In their ongoing submissions to the school board, the immersion parents, supported by immersion educators, sought to maintain their French immersion program at the secondary level with two objectives. They requested a program parallel to that offered by *français* and English schools, in order to develop the same skills and competencies as those unilingual schools. They also wanted a program developing functional bilingualism for students whose first language is English. The ultimate aim was to have students who could listen, speak, read, and write in French; who had an understanding of the Franco-Canadian culture and a respect for their own cultural heritage; and who had mastered the English language.

In examining the forces that lead to the initiation of *Collège Béliveau*, a French immersion secondary school, one is struck by the commitment and perseverance of immersion parents as represented by dynamic parent councils at the two elementary French immersion centres. Combined with knowledgeable and supportive teachers and administrators, and the model in existence at a local secondary Francophone school, parents were a dominant force in implementing the secondary program. Their impact on their children's attitudes in Grades 6, 7, and 8 in the two elementary schools and the young people's positive French immersion experience resulted in an enrolment of forty-nine Grade 7, thirty-four Grade 8, and twenty-five Grade 9 students for September 1982.

By 1985-86, *Collège Béliveau* had grown from 108 students to 331, then in Grades 7 to 12. In those first four years, the curriculum which was offered expanded to include the basic subjects for each grade level and a number of options, all with French as the language of instruction. The secondary program (see chart below) developed as a result of student interest, parental priorities, and educational considerations.

Parental involvement in the implementation of this particular secondary French immersion program was very significant. Not only did it affect political decisions, but it also influenced students' attitudes and choices regarding continuation in the immersion program.

There are other significant elements involved in the initiation and implementation of a secondary French immersion program. In

addition to a vision of a French immersion centre, parental involvement, and a comprehensive curriculum with French as the language of instruction, it is also necessary to provide transportation in the beginning years as students and parents adjust to the regional concept. As well, it is essential to have a staffing plan that provides specialists in such areas as physical education, counselling, music, art, and the library. Teachers must be recognized not only for their competence in the various subject areas, including mathematics and the sciences, but also for their firm mastery of the French language. Provision should be made for extra funding in a number of areas. In order to facilitate the development of programs for Grades 9 to 12 in the initial years, for example, funds should be provided for extra staffing. A special grant is needed for the ongoing development of a library with sufficient resources. Access should be given to translation services in order to have readily available materials in French at all levels in the various subjects.

Collège Béliveau Program[1] 1985-86

	Grade 10	Grade 11	Grade 12
Required Courses	Français	Français	Français
	Géographie	Histoire	Histoire
	Mathématiques	Mathématiques	Mathématiques
	Science	Chimie	Chimie
		Physique	Physique
		Biologie	Biologie
	Education physique	Education physique	
	English[1]	English[1]	English[1]
Optional Courses	Art	Art	Art
	Musique	Musique	Musique
	Espagnol[1]	Espagnol[1]	Espagnol[1]
	Dactylo	Dactylo	Entrainement
	Français[2]	Français[2]	
	Informatique	Informatique	
	Affaires	Comptabilité	

1 With the exception of English and Espagnol, taught in English and Spanish respectively, all courses are offered in French only.

2 These are enriched French courses, taken in addition to the basic ones.

Support services should also be available for students with special needs, including a gifted program, a resource program, and a student tutorial system. A cultural activity program should be continued from the elementary years in order to give secondary French immersion students an opportunity to use their French language skills through such activities as drama, debating, and choral work. Further, although it is more difficult in the early years of a secondary French immersion program due to the smaller lead classes, it is important to lay the groundwork for an active intramural and interscholastic athletic program.

Interaction with parents in the first years of a secondary French immersion program involves honest discussions among parents, students, and educators about English language skill development, science programs with French as the language of instruction, options, and long-term planning. It means improving the program as the years progress, with special attention to the quality of the students' oral and written French. The experience at *Collège Béliveau* has indicated that immersion centres provide opportunities to speak French in different settings, facilitate the hiring and retention of staff, and have fewer dropouts.

There are a number of specific issues that arise in the initiation and implementation of a secondary French immersion program. I have referred to such aspects as the curriculum (implementing viable programs with access to support materials and a library); staffing (the recruitment of competent teachers in the different subject areas who have excellent French language skills); the provision of student activities, including student exchange programs, drama, and music; and a vision of a secondary French immersion program shared by the different players. Long-term planning in terms of facilities, resources, staffing, and an increasing number of subject options is also essential.

A Manitoba survey undertaken in September 1988 revealed secondary French immersion administrators' perceptions of the central issues in their field; the main areas needing improvement; and the difficulties with staffing, curriculum, student activities, teacher evaluation, facilities, and support services (Asper 1988). Manitoba administrators indicated that the availability of competent teachers is a key element and an ongoing concern in secondary French immersion. Language proficiency of students, programming, planning, and the education of decision-makers were other issues that

surfaced in the survey. Those responding also mentioned the need for a greater understanding of French immersion and a concern with small populations, particularly in the first years of a program, which hinder the offering of a wide range of courses.

It followed that the main areas requiring improvement according to the administrators were teacher availability and improved teacher education. They also mentioned the need for more appropriate teaching materials, including computer software, and specific improvements in some curricular areas. Concern regarding the retention of students was expressed by the administrators in dual-track settings (schools having both immersion and non-immersion programs).

Difficulties are being experienced in specific areas. There is a particular shortage of specialist French immersion teachers in rural and northern Manitoba. Administrators expressed frustration with the lack of materials and the slowness of the translation process when it is used. French student activities are very difficult to organize in a dual-track school, and there is an increased need to provide French activities outside the school so that students can use the French language in a variety of settings. As for teacher evaluation, the ongoing problem of unilingual English administrators evaluating teachers with French as the language of instruction has not been resolved. Space problems with the ever-increasing French immersion population, building delays, and the lack of long-term planning for facilities hinder the implementation of a successful secondary French immersion program. Support services provided in French, including resource teachers, counsellors, and access to tutoring, have not been achieved. The lack of transportation for regional centres, inadequate lunchroom facilities, and meeting parental expectations for extracurricular activities continue to tap French immersion educators' imaginations.

Clearly, parents and educators find major challenges in attempting to establish a secondary French immersion program. Meeting parental and student expectations in developing a program and helping them make informed choices require much effort and consultation. Providing realistic options, in light of a dynamic political situation and the numbers of students, can sometimes test educators. Working to establish a secondary French immersion program within a community in a constant state of flux regarding French

language issues requires decisiveness and skilled communication. Once a program is established, efforts turn to improving the program in order to meet the needs of the students involved.

In short, establishing a secondary French immersion program involves carrying around dreams (Shieve and Schoenheit 1987), and fortunately we have parents who have a vision of what they want for their children and their country. Such parents are also crucial for strengthening secondary French immersion programs by encouraging students to persevere in the programs, by supporting in the acquisition of resources, and by assisting in cultural activities and excursions. They monitor the development of the program as the lead classes progress; through such structures as active parent councils and CPF chapters they provide feedback and interact as needed to maintain and improve the program. The bonding that occurs among these active parents is reflected in the school spirit attained by students and teachers.

Parents, students, teachers, and administrators must work together to establish and maintain good secondary French immersion programs. In this article, I have outlined how a particularly effective program has been established and continued in urban Manitoba. I hope that readers elsewhere will be able to draw ideas from the article to assist them in determining what is feasible in their own situations.

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Three Basic Questions about French Immersion: Research Findings

Merrill Swain

French immersion education has generated considerable research. Other papers in this volume (Burnett, Cummins, Genesee) outline some of the questions that have been asked and discuss the findings of research related to these questions. Fundamental to most research and evaluation studies of immersion education have been three issues which concern parents considering the option of French immersion education for their children. What will happen to my child's English language skills when so much of his or her education takes place in French? How proficient will my child become in French? Will my child's academic achievement suffer from having learned content matter through the medium of a second language?

In this article, an overview of the many studies which have examined these three basic questions will be provided. While reading this overview, it is important to keep in mind that these issues have been explored in literally hundreds of studies conducted across Canada by independent teams of researchers. The consensus found in the results of these studies argues strongly for their applicability to currently existing immersion programs. (For bibliographies of immersion education research see Swain and Lapkin 1982, Genesee 1987). In order to keep this review manageable, I have addressed these questions only as they pertain to two quite different programs: early total immersion and late immersion. [See Edwards, this volume, for an overview of the various French immersion and core French programs available.]

English Language Skills

The English language skills of early total immersion students have been evaluated over the years and across programs using a variety

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of techniques. These techniques have included standardized tests measuring vocabulary knowledge, reading comprehension, punctuation, spelling, and grammar; the measurement of communicative abilities and sensitivity to the needs of the listener (Genesee, Tucker, and Lambert 1975); and global and detailed scoring of stories written (Swain 1975; Genesee and Stanley 1976) and told (Edwards and Smyth 1976) by the students. Typically, the English of immersion students has been assessed by these measures, and that of groups of students in the regular English program has been assessed similarly for comparative purposes.

Generally speaking, where English speaking or listening comprehension has been assessed (Lambert and Tucker 1972), results indicate similarities between immersion and non-immersion students. A notable exception is the study conducted by Genesee, Tucker, and Lambert (1975) which found that, in their oral communicative skills, French immersion children speaking English were more sensitive to the needs of the listener than were children

educated in their native language. The researchers suggest that these findings may be related to the immersion children's experience in school, which 'may have made them more aware of possible difficulties in communicating as well as providing them with some experience in coping with such difficulties.' (p. 1013)

A clear pattern of results has emerged from repeated administrations of standardized achievement tests. In kindergarten through Grade 3, immersion students lag behind their peers in the regular English program in some aspects of English language skills. In Grade 1, for example, immersion students' scores are lower on tests of word knowledge, word discrimination, and reading in studies conducted in Ottawa and Toronto. This pattern of results persists through Grades 2 and 3, where immersion students also fail to score as well as their regular program counterparts in more technical skills such as spelling, capitalization, and punctuation (Swain and Barik 1976; Barik and Swain 1976a).

Such findings are not surprising since no formal English language instruction is provided in early total immersion programs before Grade 2, 3, or even 4. In spite of this, when a linguistic analysis was undertaken of stories written by Grade 3 immersion and non-immersion students, it was found that their abilities in spelling, punctuation, capitalization, and vocabulary use were comparable. Additionally, the immersion students used proportionately more complex and compound-complex sentences than their unilingual counterparts (Swain 1975).

By the end of Grade 5, immersion children perform as well as or better than their English-educated peers on all aspects of English language skills measured by standardized tests (Barik and Swain 1978). From Grade 5 on, in almost all instances where there have been significant differences between immersion and comparison students, immersion students have outperformed their comparison groups in such areas as punctuation, spelling, vocabulary, and grammatical usage (Swain, Lapkin, and Andrew 1981; Hart, Harley, and Lapkin 1986).

The English language skills of late immersion students have not been assessed to the same degree as those of early immersion students. This is mainly because late immersion students have had all of their earlier education in English and have not been considered at risk with respect to their English language development. Where English language skills **have** been assessed, sometimes late

immersion students score lower at the end of their first immersion year than their English-education comparison group. However, their poorer performance is only temporary; it disappears by the following year (Barik and Swain 1976b).

Thus, in answer to the important question of the consequences of immersion education for native language development, the research findings are consistent and clear. They indicate no long-term detrimental effects on English language development, and, for early total immersion students at least, a long-term enhancement of first-language skills.

These extraordinary findings can be accounted for in part by societal factors and in part by psycholinguistic factors. The communities in which the immersion students are growing up are primarily English. English is everywhere – in the home, on the streets, in the media. In fact, it surrounds these students except for the few daily hours of French in school during the week. Also, for both early and late immersion students, much of their education at some point in their schooling is in their first language. (Quite a different situation is faced by minority language children being educated in a second language.) It has also been suggested that the enhancement of first-language skills observed among the early immersion students may in part be due to their knowledge of two language systems, a knowledge which permits them to compare and contrast French and English, leading to a heightened overall linguistic awareness. It may indeed be that late immersion students in the later grades would also show a similar enhancement of English language skills, but no study has so far investigated this.

French Language Skills

One can best get a sense of the French language skills of immersion students by comparing their abilities with those of other groups of students. We can ask how early immersion students' French compares to late immersion students' French. We can also compare immersion French with that of native speakers of French, or with that of other French as a second language (FSL) groups, such as bilingual federal civil servants. Such comparisons will be made in this section with respect to the listening, reading, writing, and speaking skills of secondary school students. (For a more detailed review of the results outlined below, see Swain and Lapkin 1986.)

In the area of listening comprehension, research results show that immersion students understand what they hear. Early immersion students, as early as the late elementary grades, performed as well as students whose first language was French (Swain, Lapkin, and Andrew 1981). This continues to be the case in secondary school (Lapkin and Swain 1984a, 1984b). Throughout secondary school, early immersion students in most parts of Canada (Quebec excluded) appear to have better listening comprehension skills and are more confident about their ability to understand spoken French than late immersion students (Morrison 1985; Pawley 1984b). In Ottawa, both groups of learners, even by Grade 10, attained the highest score possible on the version given of the Public Service Commission's Language Exam (Pawley 1984b). Grade 12 immersion students who took the University of Ottawa's French entrance exam averaged 85 percent, as compared to an average of about 50 percent for the approximately 2600 students entering in 1983 (Pawley 1984b).

The reading comprehension results parallel the listening comprehension ones with respect to early and late immersion comparisons, and comparisons with other FSL groups. That is, early immersion students tend to be more confident than, and to outperform, late immersion students, while both groups perform very well with respect to other FSL groups. The results do not show the immersion students to be equivalent to native speakers of French in their reading comprehension, as they **were** found to be in listening comprehension. However, they do score at least as well at Grade 10 as a third of the Francophone population tested.

Compared to the receptive skills of listening and reading, immersion students' writing skills show fewer differences between early and late immersion students, positive comparisons with other FSL groups, and major differences between immersion and Francophone students. The Ontario Institute for Studies in Education (OISE) has conducted a series of studies in Saskatchewan (Lapkin, Swain, and Cummins 1983), New Brunswick (Lapkin and Swain 1984a), Ottawa (Lapkin and Swain 1984b), and Toronto (Lapkin and Swain 1984c). We measured the writing skills of Grade 9 and 10 immersion students with respect to discourse, sociolinguistic, and grammatical competence. Virtually no differences were found between early and late immersion students. Similar results were found by Morrison, Pawley, and Bonyun (1982) on such tasks as writing a

persuasive letter and a composition. On the writing section of the Public Service Commission's Exam, Grade 10 immersion students attained the highest level possible on the version given (Pawley 1984b). However, of fifteen grammatical measures used in the four OISE studies, fourteen showed differences favouring Francophones. On the other hand, no such differences were found between Francophones and immersion students on measures assessing their sociolinguistic and discourse performances, which do not rely heavily on grammar for their realization. Immersion students appear to recognize their relative weakness in writing, rating themselves much less confident in writing than in listening and reading.

In speaking, immersion students rate themselves as even less confident than in their writing; 41 percent of Grades 12 and 13 early immersion students and 29 percent of late immersion students in Ottawa feel 'confident' about their speaking. Comparable figures for listening are 82 percent and 69 percent respectively; for reading 83 percent and 68 percent; and for writing approximately 50 percent and 32 percent (Pawley 1984a, 1984b). In a variety of tasks – from a formal job interview to an informal discussion – both early and late immersion students show considerable grammatical weakness, with the performance of early immersion students tending to be superior to that of late immersion students. Both groups are clearly distinguishable from native speakers of French. In the speaking section of the Public Service Commission's Exam, Grade 10 Ottawa immersion students did not obtain the highest score possible as they did with the other skill areas; instead, they obtained a score representing an ability 'to deal with requests for information and to carry on conversations to a limited extent.' (Pawley 1984a) (For detailed analyses of aspects of spoken French, see, for example, Spilka 1976; Harley and Swain 1985; Harley 1986.)

Thus, it seems clear that speaking is the weakest of the four skill areas for immersion students. This generalization is derived from their own assessments of their speaking skills and their poorer performance on the speaking section of the Public Service Exam relative to the other skill areas. It is also derived from the observation that, as with writing, immersion students' performance is less native-like than with listening and reading comprehension. From a diagnostic perspective, grammatical rather than sociolinguistic or discourse weaknesses appear to be the most problematic.

Observations made in French immersion classes (Swain and Carroll 1987) suggest one possible reason for these findings: students are given relatively little opportunity to engage in extended, creative language use – either in the spoken or written mode. More opportunities need to be provided in the classroom setting for activities which engage the immersion students in interactive language use in learner-centered activities (Swain and Lapkin 1986; Genesee 1987; Swain 1988). [See also Cummins, this volume.]

Academic Achievement

When immersion programs were initiated, both parents and educators expressed concern that the students might have difficulty learning academic material when it was taught using French. For this reason, many of the research and evaluation studies of immersion programs across Canada have included standardized or locally prepared tests of academic achievement.

In the early total immersion programs, the learning of content material has been measured over the years through the use of standardized tests in mathematics and, from approximately Grade 5, through the use of standardized tests in science and social studies. It should be noted that the tests of content mastery were typically administered in English, thus potentially handicapping the immersion students who had been taught the subject material in French. The reason for this was straightforward: although parents wanted their children to learn French, they naturally wanted to be assured that their children would be able to deal with mathematical and scientific concepts in English. Almost without exception, the early immersion students perform as well as their unilingually educated peers on both computational and problem-solving tasks in mathematics. Additionally, the immersion students demonstrate equivalent performance to their comparison groups in science and social studies (Tucker 1975; Swain and Barik 1976; Swain and Lapkin 1982; Fu and Edwards 1984).

The results associated with the mastery of content by late immersion students are somewhat inconsistent. In some cases late immersion students do not perform as well on tests of subject achievement taught in French and tested in English as do their English-instructed counterparts. The results appear to be related to the subject, and to the amount of prior core French instruction that

the students have had. In Montreal and Ottawa, where students have had core French instruction each year through to the first immersion year, the level of mastery of content learned in French by the late immersion students appears to be comparable to that attained by regular English-instructed students (Genesee, Polich, and Stanley 1977; Stern et al. 1976). However, if the amount of prior core French instruction is more limited, poorer (short-term) performance in some subject areas (science, but not mathematics) has been noted (Barik and Swain 1976b).

Results from Montreal reveal that, for those late immersion students who have continued to take several course options in French throughout secondary school, average scores obtained on High School Leaving Examinations are higher than those obtained by their Francophone peers in the rest of Quebec. These examinations include *histoire*, *géographie*, *mathématiques*, and *dactylo* (typing). These results should be interpreted cautiously, owing to differences in the characteristics of students who comprise the two populations.

Summary

Research undertaken across Canada provides us with consistent and clear answers to the questions posed at the beginning of this article.

There is no long-term detrimental effect on the students' English language development as a result of participating in an immersion program. Indeed, there may be beneficial consequences.

The level of French proficiency attained will in part depend on the type of immersion program students are enrolled in, with early total immersion students tending to obtain higher scores in listening, reading, and speaking than late immersion students. Early immersion students are certainly more confident in their second-language abilities than late immersion students. Both groups of students are stronger in French listening and reading comprehension than in writing and speaking French. In the latter skill areas, the immersion students are clearly distinguishable from Francophones. In all skill areas, the immersion students do very well relative to other FSL groups.

The academic achievement of early immersion students is comparable to that of students being taught the same subject material

in English. The same is true for late immersion students if they have had considerable opportunity to learn French through core French programs prior to their immersion experience.

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The Hidden Handicap: French Immersion and Children with Learning Disabilities

Wendy J. Burnett

The conditions that are referred to collectively as learning disabilities do not, unfortunately, constitute a single, easily defined syndrome. Rather, the Learning Disabilities Association of Canada (1988) describes them as a group of disorders, resulting from central nervous system dysfunction, that may be manifested by delays in early development and/or by difficulties in attention, memory, reasoning, coordination, communication, reading, spelling, calculation, social competence, or emotional maturation. To express it more simply, learning-disabled children are those who, regardless of their actual intelligence, are unable to retain and use information effectively.

Because the indicators vary greatly from child to child, it is often not immediately evident that a child has a learning disability. In most instances parents will be aware that something is amiss long before their child's condition has been formally diagnosed. Confusion and worry routinely accompany this awareness, and if the child is enrolled in French immersion one of the first reactions of the parents may be to wonder if the problem lies in the immersion program, and whether transferring the child to an English class might be helpful.

Before taking such drastic action, two fundamental points should be considered. First, French immersion does not cause learning disabilities. Second, switching from an immersion program to the regular program is usually inadvisable because of the negative impact that the action has on the child's self-esteem. Therefore, it is important that parents inform themselves thoroughly on the issue.

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Current Research on Learning Disabilities in French Immersion

From the viewpoint of the lay reader, it is regrettable that the two principal researchers who have made learning disabilities among French immersion students a focal point of their studies have opposing opinions on the advisability of keeping a learning-disabled child in French immersion.

Ronald Trites of the Royal Ottawa Hospital and his associate, M.A. Price, have undertaken three separate studies in this field (summarized in Trites 1986), the last of them involving two hundred children from kindergarten to Grade 5, comparing the progress of children with learning difficulties who remained in the French immersion program and that of others who transferred to the English program because of similar problems. Trites concluded that one of the motor tests administered to the children revealed a delay in the maturation of the temporal lobes of the brain in the group that stayed in French immersion. Since this maturational lag disappeared at about age nine or ten, he argued that children with learning difficulties should be educated first in their maternal language and permitted to enter French immersion only at a later age. Trites also claimed that children having difficulties in French immersion develop better English language skills when transferred to the English program than do those who remain in French immersion.

Although these findings would seem to indicate that children having difficulties in French immersion should be switched to an English program, many other researchers, notably Cummins (1983), Harley (1976), and Stern et al. (1976), have expressed serious reservations about Trites's methodology. Cummins (1984) also contests the conclusions of Trites and Price, pointing out that their own data indicate that a large majority of the children who switched to the English program repeated the same grade or actually dropped back a grade, and that they had a poorer academic performance than the children with learning difficulties who stayed in French immersion.

Margaret Bruck of the Montreal Children's Hospital Learning Centre also undertook a long-range study in the 1970s, following the progress of 147 learning-disabled children in French immersion and English programs from kindergarten to Grade 3. Her conclusions were strikingly different.

Bruck's testing indicated that the learning-disabled children in Grade 3 French immersion had math skills and reading scores in English that were comparable to those of their peers in the non-immersion group and, further, that the French immersion group in her study actually performed better than the others in non-verbal aspects of linguistic functioning. The observation seems to confirm that a child who speaks two languages is likely to be more aware of the structure of language than a child with knowledge of only one language.

The results of Bruck's study are very encouraging. They indicate that learning-disabled children can stay in French immersion and still develop speaking, thinking, and academic skills at a rate similar to that of their counterparts in regular English classes, while gaining the added benefit of a second language.

Bruck's results, which have the support of most other researchers who have addressed the question, would seem to lay to rest the worries of parents of learning-disabled children. But do they? Is French immersion really suitable for every child?

In a later study (1985b), Bruck discovered that 85 percent of the parents of children with learning disabilities who had transferred from French to English felt that their children's performance had improved since the transfer, as compared with 58 percent of parents whose children had remained in French immersion. Testing and teacher questionnaires, however, showed that both groups of children had made similar progress academically. Bruck explained the contrast between the children's actual results and the parents' perception of their progress by remarking that the decision to transfer a child out of French immersion is so difficult that parents need to believe they have made the right choice. The study strongly suggests, however, that other elements besides academic progress may have to be taken into account in making a choice.

Remaining in French Immersion

What other guidelines should parents use in making the decision to keep their children in French immersion or to transfer them to an English program?

To begin with, there is general agreement that learning-disabled children should stay in French immersion if they are happy and content, particularly if their learning disabilities are not too severe.

Parents will also want to consider other factors, such as the support which the teachers and school administrators are willing to provide for their child, the availability of good remedial services, and the value which they themselves place on the program.

French immersion offers many benefits to learning-disabled children. The ability to speak French may add significantly to their self-esteem. Wiss (1988a) points out that the ability to speak French can be a real asset for learning-disabled children who live in a bilingual or Francophone area. In addition, the pedagogical approach during the first few years of French immersion is eminently suited to children with learning disabilities. 'Second language learning in Immersion is performance-based, rather than competence-based,' states Fred Genesee (1976, 236). The immersion approach involves learning to **use** a language, as opposed to being taught grammar rules without experiencing their value in communication. On the other hand, teaching methods in core French second-language programs often seem to concentrate on the learning-disabled child's weaknesses: memory work, repetition of language out of context, and the learning of abstract rules (Bruck 1979b).

Although they may lack facility in speech, learning-disabled children tend to be stronger in oral performance than in written work, and French immersion students are praised for their oral performance. Immersion teachers have remarked that some of the learning-disabled children in their classes seem to compensate for the weakness of their reading and spelling by becoming very fluent in spoken French.

Both Bruck (1985b) and Trites (1986) report that a child's self-esteem drops after a transfer from French immersion to English. Most transferring students repeat a grade, which may leave a sense of failure. A similar effect is felt even if no repetition of the year is required, if the transfer occurs before Grade 4, at a stage when the child will be far behind the rest of the new class in English academic skills. Bruck found that the attitude of children with learning disabilities who stayed in immersion was more positive than that of transfer students who had trouble adjusting and were unhappy in many situations.

In weighing the pros and cons of a transfer, it is important that parents realize that a child cannot escape a learning disability by leaving French immersion. Wiss and Burnett (1988) have shown

that a child with reading problems in French will most certainly have the same type of difficulty in English.

Switching Out of Immersion

Taking into account the positive reinforcement of the teaching approach in French immersion, and the emotional upheaval occasioned by a transfer, what circumstances might justify switching a learning-disabled child to the regular English program?

A transfer should be considered if a child is consistently unhappy. There may be several reasons other than poor academic progress for this unhappiness: the child may have no close friends in the class and feel isolated; the teacher may lack the energy or skills to deal constructively with the learning-disabled child; and the class may be so large that individual help and attention are out of the question. Perhaps the parents are not providing adequate moral support at home. If the cooperative efforts of the parents and the school are not successful in eliminating some of these conditions, and if the parents are convinced that these problems will not exist in the non-immersion program, a change should certainly be discussed.

Another important consideration in making a decision is the availability and quality of remedial services. Many feel that the inadequacy of remediation is the greatest weakness of French immersion. In 1985, CPF-Saskatchewan conducted a national survey for Canadian Parents for French which indicated that both school boards and French immersion parents were dissatisfied with the quality of remediation in French immersion ('too little, too late') and believed that remedial teachers have to cope with too many students. It should be noted, however, that parents of learning-disabled children in the regular English program usually have the same perception of remedial services.

There are grounds for hoping that new options in remediation may soon be open to French immersion students. Hitherto it had been supposed that remediation for French immersion students must be conducted in French. While remedial programs in mathematics could easily be adapted from English to French for children with math-related disabilities, the adaptation of language remedia-

tion programs was considered to be another matter. Recently, however, a study (Wiss and Burnett 1988; Wiss 1988b) suggests the possibility that once the study of English has begun, remedial work may be undertaken with equally good effect in either language. This hypothesis will require further study before it can be adopted in practice, but it does offer the possibility that one day language remediation will be a reality for French immersion students with learning disabilities who attend schools in districts that lack French language remedial services.

Remedial specialists agree that if the learning disability is not severe, if it is diagnosed at an early stage (Grade 2 or earlier), and if there are adequate support services, then there is no reason for a child to leave French immersion (Latchford 1989).

Children with severe learning disabilities, on the other hand, may require a great deal of professional and parental remedial support. Parents who do not have a good knowledge of French themselves, and for whom hiring a tutor is not a realistic option, should consider transferring their child to the regular English program in order to be able to supervise their child's studies at home in a constructive way.

Latchford (1989) argues that parents of those rare individuals whose severe language acquisition difficulties are only discovered at the Grade 5 or 6 level should be made aware that their children's educational prospects are at risk in French immersion. These children, who have managed to hide their reading disability through intelligence and hard work, will need the greatest amount of remedial intervention if they are to complete their upcoming high school course requirements. But Latchford cautions that even these high-risk students should not be transferred if the move will leave them with a damaging sense of failure.

To summarize, then, the main factors involved in the decision to transfer a learning-disabled child from French immersion will be the child's happiness, the confidence of the parents in their ability to support the child, and the severity of the child's language acquisition disability. If parents, teachers, and child agree that a transfer to the regular English program would be the best solution, then it is crucially important to plan the transition carefully to minimize negative effects.

Making French Immersion More Suitable for the Learning-Disabled Student

Given that for most learning-disabled children the option of remaining in French immersion appears to be eminently suitable, what can be done to make the program even more effective for these students?

An important first step, recommended by J. Cummins (1984), would be to allay the doubts of educators and parents by making them aware of the growing body of research data showing that French immersion and bilingualism do not contribute to the academic problems of children with learning disabilities. Another important step, albeit harder to implement, would be a concerted effort throughout the school system to diagnose learning disabilities at the earliest possible stage, since early assessment can be a critical factor in successful remediation.

Until recently, assessment of language acquisition disabilities has been difficult because of the lack of valid diagnostic tests for French immersion. Now, however, all school districts have access to the French Immersion Achievement Test of the Faculty of Education at the University of British Columbia, a diagnostic test for identifying learning problems. Not yet published is Wiss and Burnett's Analog Test, used in their research (1988) as a means of distinguishing between children with language-related learning disabilities and those who are simply poor readers. Wiss is also concerned with the necessity of finding a method to distinguish between the learning-disabled child, who will have problems in either unilingual or bilingual school situations, and the child with a developmental lag in cognitive and linguistic skills, who might profit from a later entry into French immersion (1988a). The work of A.M. Wilson (1988) of the Education Department at Mount Allison University on the use of neuropsychological tests as indicators of language disabilities in French immersion also recognizes the importance of early diagnosis and assessment in contributing to a rewarding school experience for learning-disabled children.

Trites (1976) has proposed neuropsychological testing of all children at the kindergarten level as a means of predicting their chances of success in French immersion. Most researchers believe, however, that at that age the results of such testing are too uncertain to justify the time and expense involved.

As noted earlier, parents have long been aware of the need for better remedial services for their learning-disabled children. Their awareness and their insistence on improvement will gradually persuade schools boards to provide better support services.

In the meantime, in view of the limited resources available for remediation, parents should lobby departments of education, school district administrators, school boards, and teachers' associations to plan annual workshops on the recognition of learning disabilities, basic remediation techniques, and classroom strategies for assisting learning-disabled students in French immersion. Although the need for such workshops is most pressing in districts where remediation is inadequate, their value for all teachers should be obvious when it comes to the early recognition of disabilities and the development of participatory remedial techniques.

Helping Learning-Disabled Children

Children with learning disabilities do not find learning easy, regardless of the program they are following. Teachers who have been sensitized to this fact can do a great deal to help learning-disabled students, and indeed all their students, by presenting lesson content clearly, in a well-organized fashion. They can post class rules and homework criteria in the classroom, so students can refer to them at any time. They can take a few extra moments to clarify directions and assignments individually with each learning-disabled child in the class.

On a personal level, one of the most important elements in ensuring a more satisfactory school career for the learning-disabled child is open and friendly communication between teacher(s) and parent(s). Two parent-teacher interviews and an occasional informal chat may be sufficient contact in following the progress of the ordinary child, but, to be effective, the parent-teacher support program for the learning-disabled child requires frequent (at times even daily) contact. Parents can mention their children's special talents and abilities so that the teacher can arrange opportunities for the children to experience a feeling of success and accomplishment in the classroom. Teachers can let the parents know which parts of a homework assignment need special attention and add comments about the child's performance. Together they can try to give the child the sense of self-esteem that he or she so desperately needs.

Parents of children with learning disabilities can only dream of tossing off a casual, 'Have you got your homework done?' They discover early in their children's school career that homework which an ordinary student might complete in fifteen minutes may take an hour or more of supervised effort. Parents can take turns with the supervision and may hire tutors one or two evenings a week to lighten the burden. But, inevitably, the homework sessions and the emotional problems that sometimes occur because of the learning difficulties are a severe drain on energy and patience. Parents need a support system of their own.

The local chapter of the Learning Disabilities Association of Canada can provide the support that parents need and the opportunity to share worries and insights with other parents who are experiencing the same problems. The organization is a rich source of strategies for obtaining information, organizing support, and dealing with the stress that learning disabilities place on the entire family.

Above all, parents can help their learning-disabled children and themselves by being informed, positive, and assertive. The help they need can almost always be found, but only if they insist: insist on information; insist on assessment; insist on better remediation; and insist on public attention to the hidden handicap of learning disabilities.

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The Academic, Intellectual, and Linguistic Benefits of Bilingualism

Jim Cummins

The well documented success of French immersion programs and the encouraging findings of recent studies suggest that bilingualism can positively affect both intellectual and linguistic development. These recently identified benefits of bilingualism suggest shifts in focus that could improve immersion programs.

Researchers and educators have not always believed that bilingualism has intellectual (cognitive) and linguistic benefits. Between 1920 and 1960 researchers speculated that bilingualism caused language handicaps and cognitive confusion among children, and educators therefore viewed bilingualism as a 'problem.' However, most of those early studies of the intellectual consequences of bilingualism were poorly designed and involved minority students in the process of replacing their first language with the majority one. In retrospect, researchers today suspect that such students experienced literacy, academic, and emotional difficulties not because of bilingualism but rather because of the treatment they received in schools, such as being physically punished for speaking their first language and suffering assaults on their personal identities. More recent and better-designed studies, and ones not involving mainly minority students, have led to much more positive conclusions concerning the implications of bilingualism; for example, many studies have reported that bilingual children exhibit a greater sensitivity to linguistic meaning and may be more flexible in their thinking than are unilingual children (Cummins and Swain 1986).

Most of these recent studies have investigated aspects of children's 'metalinguistic development,' that is their explicit knowledge about the structure and functions of language itself. In other words, the research suggests that bilingualism enhances children's understanding of how language itself works and their ability to manipulate language in the service of thinking and problem solving.

In general, it is not surprising that bilingual children should be more adept at certain aspects of linguistic processing. In gaining

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control over two language systems, the bilingual child has had to decipher much more language input than the unilingual child who has been exposed to only one language system. Thus, the bilingual child has had considerably more practice in analysing semantics (meanings) and syntactic (grammatical) structures.

The evidence is not conclusive as to whether this linguistic advantage transfers to more general intellectual skills. McLaughlin's review of the literature, for example, concludes that

> the child who has mastered two languages has a linguistic advantage over the monolingual child. Bilingual children become aware that there are two ways of saying the same thing. But does this sensitivity to the lexical[1] and formal aspects of language generalize to cognitive functioning? There is no conclusive answer to this question – mainly because it has proven so difficult to apply the necessary controls in research. (1984, 44)

Some studies have attempted to sidestep the problem of controlling for unilingual-bilingual differences by employing a within-group longitudinal design, that is by following the progress of the same students over time. For example, Barik and Swain (1976) reported that Grade 3 children who had attained high levels of French skills in total immersion programs made greater gains in IQ between kindergarten and Grade 3 than children in the same classes whose French skills were less well advanced. A subsequent study spanning six years (Harley and Lapkin 1984) replicated this pattern of a positive relation between level of bilingualism and intellectual growth. A similar pattern has also been reported in a longitudinal study involving Hispanic minority students in a bilingual-education program in the United States. (Hakuta and Diaz 1984)

Additive and Subtractive Bilingualism

An important characteristic of the bilingual children in the studies conducted since the early 1960s is that, for the most part, they were developing what has been termed an **additive** form of bilingualism (Lambert 1975); in other words, they were adding a second language to their repertoire of skills at no cost to the development of their first language. Consequently, these children were in the process of attaining a relatively high level of both fluency and literacy

1 Lexical means pertaining or relating to the words of a language.

in their two languages. The children in these studies tended to come either from majority-language groups whose first language was strongly reinforced in society (for example, English speakers in French immersion programs) or from minority groups whose first languages were reinforced by bilingual programs in the school. Minority children who lack this educational support for literacy development in their first language frequently develop a **subtractive** form of bilingualism in which first-language skills are replaced by second-language ones. Under certain sociopolitical conditions these children fail to develop adequate levels of literacy in either language.

This pattern of findings suggests that the level of proficiency attained by bilingual students in their two languages may be an important influence on their academic and intellectual development (Cummins 1979). Specifically, there may be a minimum level of proficiency in both languages which students must attain in order to avoid any negative academic consequences and a second, higher threshold necessary to reap the linguistic and intellectual benefits of bilingualism and biliteracy.

Diaz (1985) has questioned the threshold hypothesis on the grounds that the effects of bilingualism on intellectual abilities in his data were stronger for children of relatively low second-language proficiency. This suggests that the positive effects are related to the initial struggles and experiences of the beginning second-language learner. This interpretation does not appear to be incompatible with the threshold hypothesis, the major point of which is that for positive effects to manifest themselves children must be in the process of developing high levels of bilingual skills. If beginning second-language learners do not continue to develop both their languages, any initial positive effects are likely to be counteracted by the negative consequences of subtractive bilingualism.

The conclusion that emerges from the research on the academic, linguistic, and intellectual effects of bilingualism can be stated as follows:

The development of additive bilingualism and biliteracy skills entails no negative consequences for children's academic, linguistic, or intellectual development. On the contrary, although not conclusive, the evidence points in the direction of subtle metalinguistic, academic, and intellectual benefits for bilingual children.

Implications for Policy and Pedagogy in Immersion Programs

The most obvious implication of the potential linguistic and intellectual benefits of bilingualism is that it is important to promote high levels of proficiency in both receptive (reading and listening) and expressive (writing and speaking) aspects of French among students in immersion programs. At present, immersion programs appear to succeed better in promoting receptive French skills than expressive ones (Lister 1987; Harley, Allen, Cummins, and Swain in press). This pattern is probably related to immersion students often appearing to get little opportunity, either inside or outside class, to use French for oral or written expression (Harley et al. in press). In other words, there is ample comprehensible input in French immersion classrooms but considerably less opportunity for comprehensible output (Cummins and Swain 1986, Chapter 7). If active and creative use of French is not encouraged in immersion, students' expressive skills will fail to develop adequately, and they will also be less likely to compare and contrast the semantics and syntax of English and French. Thus, they may not reap the metalinguistic benefits of bilingualism.

A second implication is that instruction in French immersion programs might more actively attempt to focus children's attention on linguistic contrasts and similarities between French and English (for example, comparing puns, jokes, idioms, and proverbs in the two languages). Falter (1988) has recently devised an experimental procedure to develop metalinguistic skills among Grade 5 students in the Sudbury Board of Education's immersion program. The metalinguistic training procedure involved activities such as judgements of sentence acceptability and grammaticality, searching texts for words with common roots in English and French, and sentence repetition and manipulation. It was found that the metalinguistic training program resulted in significant improvement in students' performance on an English cloze test[2] compared to a control group. Significant differences were not observed on French measures, a finding that may be related to the relatively short duration of the training program (fifteen weekly 75-minute lessons).

2 The cloze test involves deleting words in a text, asking a reader to 'fill in the blanks,' and thereby determining to what degree that reader is able to create and recreate meaning as he or she proceeds through the text.

Ms. Grone, the chemistry teacher, prided herself on her clever use of bilingual puns.

A more significant positive impact on students' proficiency in their first and second languages and on their overall metalinguistic knowledge might be obtained if a contrastive focus were built into the instructional process from the early grades. For example, Grade 2 students who are writing creative stories in both English and French and 'publishing' these as classroom booklets that become part of the class library might be encouraged to create bilingual books with text in both languages, as is done in some schools in Toronto. The translation of their stories from French to English (or vice versa) so that they can be read to parents or siblings who do

not know French is an intellectually demanding activity that is likely to deepen students' knowledge of both languages. It is important to stress, however, that any such bilingual activity should be meaningful and authentic and intrinsically motivating to students, rather than just an academic exercise.

In short, I am suggesting that serious attention be given to reducing the rigid barrier that often separates first-language and second-language instruction in French immersion. The goal would be to encourage more active comparison of English and French structures and patterns of language in the context of oral and written expressive activities to which students are actively committed.

A third implication of the metalinguistic benefits that bilingualism could promote is that students in immersion programs should be actively encouraged to expand their linguistic repertoires to include additional languages at the secondary level, or earlier if the opportunity presents itself. Swain, Lapkin, Rowen, and Hart (1988) have shown that immersion students who have already developed literacy in a heritage language perform significantly better in French than students who come from English-only backgrounds. This finding clearly suggests the educational value of promoting heritage languages, but it also points to the advantage that immersion students are likely to have in learning additional languages. Just as there are secondary schools that specialize in the arts or in science and technology, there could be secondary schools that specialize in language enrichment. All students in these schools would be expected to take instruction in English, French, and at least one additional language (such as Greek, Italian, Chinese, or Japanese), several of which might be offered in any particular school. Similar programs have been evaluated as highly successful in Europe (Baetenes Beardsmore and Kohls 1988) and Canadian cities have ample linguistic resources to pursue this form of language enrichment. The goal here would be not only to encourage students to develop skills in an additional language but also to further deepen their understanding of how language works and their love of language.

In summary, the research data clearly support Goethe's dictum that 'the person who knows only one language does not truly know that language.' We have, however, only begun to explore instructional means for systematically deepening students' understanding of the nature of language itself in French immersion programs.

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Beyond Bilingualism: Sociocultural Studies of Immersion

Fred Genesee

French immersion programs have established themselves in Canada as distinctive and highly effective ways to promote second-language learning (see Genesee 1987 for a review). However, the goals of French immersion programs are not exclusively linguistic and academic in nature; they are also social. This is particularly true in bilingual regions of the country where there is hope that immersion programs will foster more positive attitudes and cross-cultural communication between Canada's predominant ethnolinguistic groups. Thus, along with evaluations of French immersion students' academic and language development, researchers have undertaken to investigate certain social aspects of the immersion experience. Roughly speaking, the research undertaken so far can be grouped into one of three broad categories: students' attitudes towards French immersion itself; attitudinal and motivational factors in second-language usage; and ethnic identity and intergroup perceptions. In this article, I examine briefly each of these groups of research studies. The reader is referred to other publications for more detailed reports of this research: Genesee (1984), Genesee (1987), Lambert (1987), and Swain and Lapkin (1982).

Before beginning, it is important to underline that by its very nature, society is in a constant state of change and, therefore, the reader must appreciate that the results of research on social phenomena may also change. Consequently, the picture that is sketched out in this chapter may not be descriptive of future research findings.

Student Attitudes Towards French Immersion

Genesee (1978) asked Grade 6 students in early total French immersion and Grade 11 students from a one-year late immersion

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program in Montreal their opinions of their respective programs. Students in the same grades of a core French program were similarly surveyed. Although 29 percent of the early immersion students and 35 percent of the late immersion students surveyed said that they thought French immersion was more work than a regular English program, both groups indicated that they were very happy to have been in immersion. On a scale from 1 (very happy) to 7 (very unhappy), the average rating of the early immersion students was 1.55, the late immersion students 1.72. As well, 82 percent of the early immersion students and 77 percent of the late immersion students said they would recommend it to younger brothers and sisters. Lambert and Tucker (1972) found similar results for Grade 5 students in the original St. Lambert French immersion program. Of additional interest, they also found that students in the core French program were unhappy with their French course. Finally, Swain and Lapkin (1982) have reported similarly positive reactions towards French immersion on the part of students in Ontario, where the presence of French Canadians in the community at large is not as great as in Quebec.

Cziko, Lambert, Sidoti, and Tucker (1980) carried out a study of St. Lambert immersion students' retrospective attitudes towards French immersion one year after they had graduated from high school. The students and their parents expressed a clear appreciation for the early immersion experience, and the majority of those who took part in the study said that they would choose the French immersion option again if they had to do it over. The St. Lambert immersion graduates expressed feelings of well-being, self-assurance, and satisfaction with their French. In fact, a number of them felt capable of working in French and had a desire to continue to study and learn French (see also Wesche, Morrison, Pawley, and Ready 1986). De Vries (1988) has also looked at the retrospective attitudes of immersion students in some detail. The students he surveyed had graduated from programs in the Ottawa area, which like Montreal provides real opportunities for language use outside school. Of his four hundred respondents, 83 percent rated the French immersion experience as 'good,' less than 1 percent rated it as 'bad,' and 16 percent felt that it made no difference.

Let us now look at immersion students' use of French outside school and their attitudes about using French outside school.

Attitudes, Motivation, and Second-Language Use

Genesee (1978, 1981) has carried out a number of studies to examine the language habits and attitudes of French immersion students outside school. After all, it was the growing importance of French in ordinary day-to-day events that led to the development of French immersion in Quebec in the first place. This research has, of course, been carried out in Montreal where there are numerous real opportunities to speak French and interact with French Canadians. In order to collect some of this information, Genesee asked students to keep diaries over several days of what languages they used, with whom, for how long, and for what reasons. The students' parents were asked to do the same.

The immersion students reported that they generally felt relatively comfortable and confident when speaking French with Francophones. In contrast, non-immersion students who were included in Genesee's survey for comparison purposes reported that they felt uncomfortable and lacked confidence in situations that called for the use of French. The immersion students rated their reading and listening skills relatively high in comparison with their speaking and writing skills (see also Wesche, Morrison, Pawley, and Ready 1986). In contrast, the non-immersion students rated all of their French language skills low in comparison to the ratings of the immersion students.

Despite their apparent satisfaction and confidence with their French achievement, French immersion students appear to seek native-like levels of proficiency in French and, therefore, are often critical of achievement that falls below this high standard. Moreover, in personal interviews, immersion students often express realistic assessments of their French skills; they recognize that the French that they have learned in school is not exactly the same style of French they might encounter in everyday social situations or in professional situations outside school. This is to be expected, given the complexity of language and the extensive variation which characterizes its use in different settings. Most professions, such as medicine and law, require 'on-the-job training' before graduates are licenced to practice fully. We should probably expect the same when it comes to something as complex as language. In other words, use and practice of French in extracurricular settings is called for if graduates of French immersion are to feel totally comfortable in using French in a wide variety of settings.

The reports of immersion students surveyed by Genesee also indicated that they were more likely than the non-immersion students to respond in French when spoken to in French and that they were less likely to avoid situations where French would be spoken. Their diary entries revealed that they actually used French significantly more often than did the non-immersion students in public situations, such as in stores, in the subway, or on the bus. De Vries found that use of French occurred most often in conjunction with travel, friends, reading, radio, and television. Fully one third of his respondents who had jobs reported using French half of the time. He concluded: 'Overall, it appears that French usage at work, for these respondents, was most common when they were interacting with the public.' (1988, 152)

At the same time, there are indications that immersion students do not use French much in certain situations. Genesee found that they were no more likely than the non-immersion students to watch French television, listen to French radio, or go to French movies. Furthermore, the actual frequency and duration of French use in these contexts was negligible when compared to their use of English in the same contexts. Similarly, De Vries found that most of his respondents never used French to listen to popular music or to view films and plays. Wesche et al. (1986) found that overall the frequency with which first-year university students who had graduated from French immersion actually used French was quite low.

Genesee characterized the immersion students' use of French as **reactive** as opposed to **active,** in the sense that they appeared to be willing to use French and were comfortable doing so when called upon, but they did not take the initiative to seek out situations where they could use French. Watching French television, listening to French radio, and going to French movies or theatre requires an active personal decision to use French. Using French in stores, in restaurants, and on the bus, in response to service personnel who speak French, requires a willingness and ability to respond to others' linguistic choices. It does not necessarily involve personal initiative. Genesee (1981) found that the parents of the French immersion students he surveyed reported the same patterns of usage of French as their children. It is quite possible then that the parents' second-language habits had an important influence on the students' language usage.

Isn't this nice? Now she can ask for Potage aux huitres, Coquilles St.-Jacques, Jambon froid, and Poire cardinal instead of just burger and fries.
MENU
BOOTHROYD

Cleghorn and Genesee (1984) have suggested that French immersion students' language attitudes and usage might also be influenced by factors within schools offering French immersion themselves. More specifically, they have proposed that since such schools are part of the fabric of society at large, they will reflect important social patterns and processes within that society. The instructional staff in most schools providing French immersion is made up of both English-Canadian and French-Canadian teachers. In the past, relations between English Canadians and French Canadians have been characterized by 'two solitudes' and even hostility. One might expect teachers in schools with French immersion programs to experience the same kinds of conflict in their interactions with one another. In other words, since English-Canadian and French-Canadian teachers do not stop being English Canadians and French Canadians once they set foot in the school, they may recreate the same climate in the school that exists outside.

In order to study the social atmosphere of such schools, Cleghorn spent most of one year unobtrusively but systematically observing interactions between the members (students, teachers, support staff) of one typical school providing early immersion in the

Montreal area. In brief, she found that the French immersion teachers spoke French exclusively with the immersion students and with their French colleagues. The English-speaking teachers spoke English with the students and with their English-speaking colleagues. But, when together, the English and French teachers avoided speaking with one another. The reasons for this are complex, but one explanation is fairly straightforward. The English teachers did not want to use English with the French teachers because that would force the French teachers to use English with them. To do this would violate an important principle in many schools offering French immersion, namely, to give the impression that the immersion teachers only speak French. Moreover, the immersion teachers could not speak English to their English-speaking colleagues because this also would reveal to the students that they can and will use English. It is often considered desirable to present French immersion teachers as unilingual models of French in order to encourage the immersion students to use French as much as possible. Although this pattern of language use makes some pedagogical sense, from the students' point of view the two solitudes situation which the students often see in the community is being reinforced in school. We are not sure what effect, if any, this kind of situation might have on immersion students' achievement or language usage. But, if we want to ensure that immersion programs provide students with models of English Canadians and French Canadians actively working together with open and mutual respect for one another's language and culture, we may have to help teachers overcome some of the difficulties posed by this challenge. This is a complex issue that deserves further inquiry.

Bilingualism, Ethnic Identity, and Intergroup Perceptions

Language often serves as an important symbol of ethnic identity – a symbol of who one is and who others are. This is certainly true in Canada where language and language distinctiveness have become an integral part of national and regional identities. Lambert (1980) has suggested that the social-psychological consequences of bilingualism will depend on the sociocultural dominance of the languages and language groups involved. More specifically, he contends that acquisition of a second language and contact with a second-language group by members of a majority ethnolinguistic

group, such as English-Canadian children, are likely to lead to an **additive** form of bilingualism. By this he means that acquisition of a second language is not likely to displace or dilute in any way the learners' home language or culture. Thus, such bilingual individuals will probably acquire two mutually viable language systems and therefore have access to two cultures.

Research on the ethnic identity of English-Canadian students in French immersion programs supports Lambert's notion of additive bilingualism. Genesee (1977) and Cziko, Lambert, and Gutter (1980) examined the ethnic identity of early immersion students in two separate but similar studies. The students in each study were asked to indicate how similar or dissimilar they thought a number of personal and ethnic concepts were to one another. For example, they might be given the pair **French Canadian – English Canadian** and be asked to rate their similarity on a scale from 1 (very similar) to 9 (very dissimilar). In all, fourteen concepts were presented to the students in this way – for example, **myself**, **English Canadian**, **French Canadian**, **Quebecer**, **American**. The statistical analysis of their responses produced a type of 'psychological map' in which concepts rated as similar are located close together on the map and concepts rated as dissimilar are located at some distance from one another. This type of analysis is particularly instructive because it permits the researcher to examine students' psychological perceptions of important components of their social world.

The results indicated that the social perceptions of the French immersion students were the same as those of students in regular English programs in two ways. First, two major clusters of concepts could be identified in the responses of both groups of students – one was associated with the English language and English Canadians, the other with the French language and French Canadians. Second, both immersion and non-immersion students identified themselves (**myself**) with the English-Canadian cluster. At the same time, the immersion students differed from the non-immersion students with respect to their perceptions of French Canadians – they tended to perceive the English and French clusters as more similar. They also tended to see themselves as more similar to French Canadians. Another way of describing this is to say that the French immersion students saw less social distance between themselves and French Canadians. Speaking another group's language may result in feeling more similar to that group. These perceptions do not

necessarily mean that the students had more positive attitudes towards the French-Canadian group; they simply reflect perceptions of similarity and dissimilarity. However, the development of perceptions of similarity may be important for establishing more communication and more positive attitudes between the groups in the long run (Lambert 1987).

Studies of French immersion students' attitudes have yielded more complex results. In their longitudinal evaluation of the St. Lambert immersion program, Lambert and Tucker (1972) repeatedly assessed the attitudes of immersion and non-immersion students towards themselves, English Canadians, and French Canadians. They found that immersion students in the early elementary grades saw themselves and other English Canadians in a more favourable way than did the non-immersion students. Similarly, the immersion students saw French Canadians in a more favourable way. When the attitude profiles of the same students were examined in the upper elementary grades, there were relatively few differences between the immersion and non-immersion students. Genesee has reported a similar pattern of results for students participating in late immersion programs in Montreal (Genesee, Morin, and Allister 1974). Thus, the French immersion students initially expressed more favourable attitudes towards French Canadians but subsequently their attitudes resembled those of their non-immersion peers.

Immersion students' attitudes towards French Canadians may come to be the same as those of students in the English program because there is an absence of real social contact with French Canadians in most immersion classes and, therefore, there is little evidence on which to sustain positive attitudes over an extended period of time. As well, it may be difficult for Anglophone students in French immersion programs in Canada to develop and sustain positive attitudes towards French Canadians when they are often faced with stories about conflict between the French and English in newspaper reports and radio broadcasts. Indeed, major political conflicts involving language have occurred in Quebec and elsewhere in Canada since the first immersion programs were initiated. In a related vein, Genesee, Rogers, and Holobow (1983) found that students' achievement in French depended not only on their own attitudes but also on what they believed were the attitudes of French Canadians towards them. Students who believed that

French Canadians favoured English Canadians learning French had higher levels of achievement in French than students who believed that such support was lacking.

The potential importance of daily contact between English Canadians and French Canadians for developing positive attitudes is underlined in a study of immersion students in all-French schools versus all-English schools in Montreal (Genesee, Morin, and Allister 1974). The Anglophone students who had been attending an immersion program in an all-French school had had the opportunity to interact with French-speaking students of the same age on a day-to-day basis whereas the Anglophone students in the regular immersion program in otherwise all-English schools had had no such opportunities. The results indicated that while the attitudes of both immersion groups towards French Canadians were more favourable than those of non-immersion students, the immersion students in the all-French school expressed particularly favourable attitudes towards French Canadians. Once again, we find evidence here of the importance of the social context in which immersion students learn French.

Conclusions

Studies of the social aspects of immersion programs have revealed a complex and variegated picture. We have found that French immersion students are very enthusiastic about the program: they report very high levels of satisfaction with it; they would recommend it to others; and they would certainly do it all over again if they had the choice. Many graduates of immersion programs express interest in pursuing their study of French beyond high school and, indeed, many express an interest in studying other languages. Wesche et al.'s survey of university students who have graduated from French immersion indicates a concern on the part of such graduates for more opportunities to use French and study in French at the postsecondary school level.

When questioned about their French language competence, immersion students rate their comprehension skills ahead of their speaking skills, a finding which is supported by objective test results. As well, immersion students from both early and late programs express satisfaction, confidence, and pride in their ability to communicate through French. At the same time, they are realistic about their abilities and recognize that the French they use in

school is not always the same style as the French they will be called upon to understand or use outside school. This is to be expected since, in fact, language is used in very different ways in different contexts. Learning to use a language in one context does not mean that one is automatically able to use it in unrelated contexts. Immersion students also seem to hold high standards for themselves; nothing short of native-like competence is satisfactory. Thus, it is not uncommon to find that they are 'tough critics' of their own accomplishments and of French immersion programs.

Surveys of immersion students' actual use of French outside school indicates that they use French more often in public settings than students who have been learning French through the core French program. At the same time, it appears that immersion students do not use all of the French language resources available to them, such as radio, television, theatre, and cinema. Indeed, there is evidence that the adult English-speaking models around them (that is, their parents) do not either. Nor does it appear from Cleghorn's observations of language use in schools offering French immersion that French and English teachers provide students with models of bilingual communication between English Canadians and French Canadians.

As Lambert's notion of additive bilingualism would predict, French immersion students experience no loss in cultural identity; they identify themselves as being English Canadians to the same extent as students in all-English programs. At the same time, they express a special pride in mastering Canada's two official languages and a sense of similarity to and, therefore, affinity with French Canadians that comes from knowing French. Immersion students often express more positive attitudes towards French Canadians during the initial years of the program and then their attitudes come to resemble those of their peers taught in English. When questioned directly about English-French relations in Canada, French immersion students are enthusiastic and pragmatic. They recognize that there are real, deep-seated differences that divide English and French Canadians and that there are no simple solutions to these differences. Lambert (1987) has argued from his review of the research findings that bilingual youngsters have more mature insights into society than unilingual youngsters.

It should not be surprising that the picture that has emerged from research on social aspects of French immersion is complex and that, on balance, the net social effect of immersion on the

participating students is mixed in certain respects. After all, language is one dimension in a complex network of social, economic, and political factors that influence intergroup relations, which in turn influence second-language learning and use. While there are indications from the research that we need more reflection and effort on some fronts, there are sure signs of accomplishment and exciting change on many other fronts.

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Administrative Challenges of Early French Immersion

W.R. McGillivray

This paper is a summary of some of the administrative challenges that arose during the first ten years that the author was responsible for early French immersion programs. In no sense is this an attempt to discourage boards from beginning early immersion programs; it is merely an effort to forewarn them of the likely consequences of a decision to offer such a program.

The main source of challenges arising from early immersion is, paradoxically, its almost certain success. From its first beginnings in private schools, through St. Lambert, Ottawa-Carleton, Toronto, Winnipeg, Edmonton, and to every part of Canada, the story of early immersion has been one of remarkable and consistent success, whether measured by careful research or simply by the enthusiastic support of parents.

Thus, in choosing a location for beginning early immersion, a board should expect growth. This may mean that a school with a kindergarten intake of fewer than fifty may not be a logical choice even if the parents in that school's attendance area have been instrumental in convincing the board to offer the program. If the usual pattern continues, the English-program classes will be so small that they will almost certainly be economically difficult and educationally questionable. The board will then have to decide whether to subsidize these small classes or, alternatively, to direct

W.R. (Russ) McGillivray, Superintendent of Program for the Carleton Board of Education in suburban Ottawa, died in 1986. Russ McGillivray was a pioneer in French immersion, a great friend of Canadian Parents for French, and the editor of CPF's *More French, s'il vous plait!* The respect which he earned from our organization is indicated by the existence of two commemorative awards. Each year the McGillivray Award, instituted by Canadian Parents for French to recognize his outstanding contributions to French second-language education in Canada, is presented to the senior immersion winner of the *Concours d'art oratoire* in each province and territory. Also, each year CPF-Ontario presents the W. Russ McGillivray Award to an outstanding educator in the province.

Russ wrote an article for the first edition of this book. The article remains timely, more than ten years after it was originally written, so we have included it in this edition with only minor alterations. We have also appended another brief note which attempts to place this important article in its historical context. B.F. and M.W.

English-program children to a neighboring school – not an easy decision to make!

A board has two possible solutions, realizing the almost certain consequences of beginning French immersion in a relatively small school. It might select a large elementary school with a kindergarten intake of a hundred or so and hope that a normal split of immersion and non-immersion will maintain the non-immersion program, or it might select another school with a relatively small and declining enrolment and designate it as an immersion centre. This means that all those enrolled in French immersion in the general area of the centre will be directed and transported to it, and the few wishing a regular English program in the attendance area of the immersion centre will be directed elsewhere. This is still not an easy decision, but at least it is clear from the beginning and does not mislead anyone. From the immersion viewpoint there are some very real advantages to the immersion centre with respect to staffing, programming, and budgeting. The immersion centre may be the better decision for both programs.

Having decided on the location, a board must ensure that it has the appropriate staff and the program to implement immersion successfully. In addition to the teachers directly involved, the immersion school will require a principal who can supervise the staff and the program, that is, a principal with a high level of competence in French. As the program expands, there will be an increasing need for board consultative staff to select teachers, to develop and adapt programs, to arrange inservice training, and to assist in evaluating the results of the program. Since most boards, in a time of teacher redundancy, are unable to hire outsiders for some of these positions, they may have to consider seriously some intensive and extended language-training programs for incumbent staff.

Programs for early immersion are now more readily available than they were a few years ago. A board now has a choice and should give appropriate staff time to investigate the various possibilities. Whatever the choice, it will cost money: for texts, workbooks, teaching material, audio-visual equipment, teaching aids, and additional library books. The word 'additional' is precise here, because most of the English books normally found in elementary school libraries and classrooms will still be required. The children in French immersion are, after all, Anglophone, and will be encouraged to read whatever interests them in either language, especially after English is introduced.

Many of these start-up costs are one-time costs, but a board budget must recognize that an immersion school will require a special allocation of funds for each new grade as the program continues. If the school also has the English program, the principal must be given sufficient resources to support both programs adequately. He may also have to be given extra staff for small classes, either immersion or regular, that may result. Immersion and regular classes cannot, of course, be combined, and therefore a principal must maintain small classes that he could normally even out.

The principal will also face some incompatibility problems in locating his French immersion and regular classes, particularly if his school has the open concept. Kindergarten immersion children must tune their ears to the sounds of French as quickly as possible, and this 'tuning' would be difficult if a class in English were being carried on at the other end of the double kindergarten.

Class timetables may also be tightened up by the dual programs. If the principal has managed to afford specialist music, physical education, or remedial teachers, he will find that they cannot generally be used for the immersion classes which require these specialties in French. As the immersion program expands, he will find it more and more difficult to maintain these specialists to serve a dwindling non-immersion program and equally difficult to afford similar bilingual specialists to serve the immersion classes. Beginning in Grade 2, 3, or 4, the hour a day of English instruction for the immersion classes further tightens up the timetable.

Staffing his French immersion classes may be among the most difficult of the challenges facing the principal of an immersion school. Finding immersion teachers is not impossible, but experienced immersion teachers are still very scarce. The principal may have a choice of a core French teacher trained to teach French as a second language but lacking experience in regular classroom teaching, or a Francophone teacher trained for classroom work in French language schools with no training in second-language teaching. The former requires training in the teaching of all subjects in French and may require additional training in French, and the latter requires training in the skills of teaching in a second language. Neither type of training is readily available in the regular programs of most teacher-training institutions in Canada, although a few programs are now offered and there is clear recognition of the need.

Most beginning immersion teachers need help. An unusual supervisory load is put upon the immersion principal to provide this help either himself, if he is capable, or through consultants and board-organized inservice programs. They will need help in understanding and adapting programs, in devising and assessing teaching strategies for immersion, in evaluating pupil progress using a new set of criteria, in reassuring concerned parents, and in working harmoniously with the English-program teachers whose jobs they may be threatening.

It is unfortunate that the French immersion program should have come along just as elementary enrolments started to decline. The teacher redundancy resulting from declining enrolment is accelerated by the requirement for specially qualified teachers for the immersion programs. It is not surprising that some English teachers feel threatened by the immersion programs as they flourish and expand. A principal and a board must be aware of this potential difficulty and make every effort to anticipate and overcome it, without jeopardizing the quality of the immersion programs. Even an obvious policy such as not using bilingual teachers to teach in English, thus protecting as many English positions as possible, may assist in easing a difficult situation.

An immersion principal may find that concerned parents occupy more than the usual amount of his time. Most immersion parents are very supportive of the program and are delighted that their children have this opportunity, but they are also worried. Although research results over the years have been consistently positive, parents of young children nevertheless may be concerned about possible negative effects of French immersion. They need more frequent reassurance that their children are progressing normally in immersion, even if their progress is different from that of older children who were in a regular program. They need to be counselled and reassured about how to help their immersion children at home, either in extending the immersion experience or in enriching their experience in English. They also need to be advised, clearly and quickly, if their children are having special difficulties which may require a decision regarding their continuance in immersion.

In reporting pupil progress, principals will find it easier to do so with reference to the progress in English because of the availability of standardized tests in English and the relative scarcity of tests that are valid for immersion. A few have been developed but the

usual practice has been to measure progress in French by means of tests developed for Francophones, and these have sometimes resulted in unsatisfactory results. This need for suitable measurement of progress in immersion, for suitable programs, for new combinations of time in English and French to be tried, and for valid comparisons of the various types of immersion, all add up to a challenging and unique set of issues facing any board that embarks on immersion.

As the early immersion program proceeds into secondary school, additional challenges arise. Boards must decide whether or not pupils from several French immersion schools should be directed to one central school or whether the normal feeding pattern should apply. Decisions regarding the number and choice of bilingual options will have to be made and programs and teachers found. Supervision of these programs is complicated by the fact that large high schools are divided into departments. Nevertheless, it must be recognized that French immersion is not just an elementary school program, but one that continues to the end of high school and beyond.

This paper has focused on a few of the challenges that a school board might expect to face in inaugurating a program of early immersion for its pupils. In so doing, the author has not wished to dissuade any board from beginning immersion but rather to offer the wisdom of hindsight after ten years of immersion experience. This experience may help boards to anticipate and minimize some of these difficulties.

Whatever the challenges, the immersion approach to learning a second language seems to be here to stay, at least in Canada. Parents have recognized its value as an excellent educational experience for their children, and they also foresee its obvious value to their children in the Canada of the future. Because our school systems serve the needs and wishes of pupils and parents, school boards and officials must be prepared to meet the challenges that this revolutionary program presents.

As we indicate in our Introduction to this book, French immersion has expanded and improved over the past ten years. We now know more about some of the issues raised by Russ McGillivray; some of the challenges have been or can be met, while others that he identified then are even greater today. We would like to comment briefly on some of these matters.

It remains the case that, as Russ McGillivray put it, 'the main source of challenges arising from early immersion is, paradoxically, its almost certain success.'

Perhaps the major challenge posed today by the success of French immersion is its implications for teacher supply. In many districts across the country, more than half of the elementary-grade children are in immersion programs. Immersion teacher supply is, for this reason, a greater challenge today than it was in the late 1970s. Since Russ McGillivray's article was written, there has been a growing recognition of the need for additional teacher training and retraining programs. However, recent developments in this area have not kept pace with the increasing demand for immersion teachers. In our Introduction, we have addressed the question of French second-language teacher supply in general.

Another challenge posed by the success of French immersion is the need to offer continuing immersion in the secondary grades and to encourage students to take advantage of it. School boards, high schools, parents, and CPF itself have begun to address this challenge, but much remains to be done.

The relative advantages and disadvantages of the 'immersion centre' are still being debated. One new element that is being considered is that this option may be less appropriate or practical in rural and semi-rural areas than in urban areas. School boards continue to have to wrestle with the difficulties identified by Russ McGillivray.

On the other hand, the experience of the ten years following Russ McGillivray's article has been encouraging in a number of respects. We now conclude with some certainty that the 'additional costs' of immersion are minimal once a program has been established. Also, there has been some progress made in developing standardized tests for immersion students. In addition, educators are now better equipped to deal with the administrative and educational challenges posed by immersion students who experience learning difficulties. Further, most of the understandable concerns and anxieties of parents who are considering enrolling their children in an immersion program have not been substantiated by the research, as can be seen from a number of the articles in this book.

Thus, although the expansion and improvement of French immersion may have magnified some of the administrative challenges identified by Russ McGillivray, the experience of the past ten years and the results of the continuing research have also led to a clearer understanding of how to resolve some of the other issues he raised in the late 1970s. Our conclusion is the same as Russ McGillivray's: 'School boards and officials must be prepared to meet the challenges that this revolutionary program presents.' B.F. and M.W.

Immersion Teacher Education: the Making of a Professional[1]

Pierre Calvé

It is often said that 'teaching is an art' or that 'good teachers are born teachers.' Such statements are mainly used to explain the fact that some have more success than others in the teaching profession, regardless of their specialized educational background (or lack thereof) or instructional techniques. Most people who agree with such statements would probably also agree that, in order to teach how to fly a Boeing 747 or how to perform open heart surgery, something else besides innate or natural talent is necessary, and that this 'something else' is at least as important as the art of communicating it.

This article is about the 'something else' of second-language teaching in general, and of French immersion teaching in particular. Teaching, considered either as a profession or as a process, is too often divorced in teacher education programs from what is being taught, to whom, for what reason, and under what conditions. Of course, there are underlying rules that apply to any teaching situation, from the growing of tomatoes to the performing of surgery to the speaking of a second language. Most of these rules, however, cannot be acquired independently of the subject matter to be taught, the nature of the learners, the instructional objectives, or the situations wherein the whole process will take place.

This is particularly true in the case of second-language teacher education where there is, in most cases, little correspondence between the candidate's own experience with language, whether as a user or as a student, and the actual act of teaching a second language. As users, we are mostly unaware of the way we have acquired our first (or even second) language, of the way it is organized in our brain, and of the processes involved in translating

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1 I would like to thank my colleagues Professors Sima Paribakht and Mari Wesche for their constructive comments on an earlier version of this paper.

ideas into sounds, words, and sentences (or vice versa). Even if we were aware of these processes, it does not mean that they would correspond to the way we would actually attempt to teach our students how to acquire them in a classroom situation. Likewise, as students of our own language, we all have acquired some conscious knowledge of the functioning of this language, mostly in its written form, and often through studying its grammatical rules. However, as experience has shown, merely teaching the grammar of a second language in the way we have studied the grammar of our own (which we did **after** we had learned how to speak it) is not by itself enough to make our students acquire this language as a means of communication.

Thus, contrary to teaching someone how to fly an airplane, where instructors will teach exactly what they have themselves learned as pilots, second-language teachers will not simply teach what they have learned about that language, either as students or as users of the language.

What is it then that the French immersion teacher should ideally have acquired during his or her training? The word 'ideally' here is important because most teachers have not received such a complete preparation. This does not mean that their work is unsatisfactory; the success of French immersion is proof to the contrary. However, the program I am about to suggest here may constitute a goal towards which our teacher education programs should aim, so that the second-language classroom can claim maximum benefits from our growing body of knowledge about and experience in second-language learning and teaching. I would like at this point to emphasize that every second-language teacher, whether in core or immersion programs, should have access to the same high standards of quality in his or her specialized preparation.

In order to acquire even a minimum amount of usable knowledge and skill in each of the areas proposed below, the student-teacher will need much more time than is currently allowed in most teacher education programs. In fact, a full university program (four or five years including certification) could and should be devoted to the task of preparing immersion and core teachers, just as we do not hesitate to accept full undergraduate programs for future translators, administrators, and even comedians. Of course, requiring such a complete preparation would imply that, contrary to what is often the case now, entering university students would have to decide

early in their study program, just as they do in any other areas of specialization, that they want to become a) teachers, b) second-language teachers, c) immersion or core teachers, d) French, mathematics, history, geography ... teachers, and e) elementary or secondary school teachers. Only then will it be possible to offer them a proper mix of the components and notions described in this article.

The program proposed here applies mainly to future secondary immersion teachers but most of it, with some adjustments made in the content and the relative importance of each component, would equally apply to primary school immersion teachers and core French teachers.

Components of a Complete University Program for French Immersion Teachers

1 General knowledge and culture

This component refers simply to the areas of knowledge that should be part of any educated person's background. It includes courses in such areas as philosophy, history, social sciences, grammar, composition, and literature. Most universities already have such 'general education' courses as part of their requirements and some pressure has been applied lately towards increasing their number in order to compensate for the pragmatism and over-specialization that are sometimes deplored in our present-day educational systems. In the case of teachers, and especially language teachers, this component is very important if we consider that they will serve as models and transmitters of cultural knowledge and values.

2 General pedagogy

Included in this component are the courses usually found in basic teacher certification programs offered by faculties of education. These courses are sometimes taken concurrently with ones leading to a first degree, or they can be taken separately as part of a totally independent program. I tend to support the first approach, which allows for a better integration of all the courses that will be part of the teacher's preparation, whether they deal with the subjects to be taught or the way they should be taught. Under 'general pedagogy' are included courses in the areas of history, philosophy, and theory

of education; basic pedagogical and methodological principles and approaches; evaluation; and educational technology. General pedagogy also includes class observation, teaching practice, and special methodology courses (pertaining to each school subject), but in the program outlined here, this last area will be included in the 'Second-language teaching' component.

3 Subject areas of specialization

This component will be particularly important for immersion candidates who will be teaching subjects other than French, especially at the secondary level. It should include the same courses as the ones required from candidates who are going to teach these subjects in regular, non-immersion programs, except that, in the case of the immersion candidates, these subjects should, at least in part, be taken in French. Thus, a future mathematics teacher should have an excellent background in mathematics, whether or not he or she is going to teach in French immersion or regular classes. At the level of the methodology classes, however, the difference between these two types of teaching situations should be made clear, and the immersion candidate should learn, by study, observation, and practice, the particularities of teaching such a subject in the students' second language. He or she will have to learn, for example, how to reconcile the requirements of the program with the students' limitations in the language; how to introduce them to the needed specialized vocabulary; how to react to their linguistic errors (and prevent them if possible); and how sometimes to simplify their instructional language but without **over**simplifying it, since the students need to develop native comprehension.

An immersion teacher is both a 'subject teacher' and a 'second-language teacher,' and giving to each of these specialties an adequate amount of preparation is certainly one of the greatest challenges of the profession. This is especially true at the secondary level, where unhappy compromises between subject mastery and language competence are sometimes made. Much work and research remain to be done in this area.

As for the candidate who will be teaching French (and not only **in** French) in immersion, the time devoted to this component should be used to take additional courses in such areas as French pronunciation, oral and written grammar, stylistics, literature, and

culture, as well as in the methodology of each skill, in dialectology, in error analysis and correction, and in testing.[2] The role of French teachers in immersion programs is extremely important, since it is mostly in their classes that students polish and complete the often merely approximate competence they have acquired by mere exposure to the language in the other courses (or among themselves). It is there also that they gain what I have called an 'education' in addition to a mere 'training' in the language (Calvé 1986, 1988a).

4 Proficiency in French

This obvious requirement concerns the mastery of the language expected of any second-language teacher, whether in core or in immersion programs. Canadian schools, especially schools offering French immersion, have generally been able, until recently, to count on a good pool of French-speaking teachers (not necessarily of French origin). However, with the growing demand experienced both in immersion and core classes, unhappy compromises are more and more the case. The increase in quantity is sometimes made at the cost of quality in the teacher's mastery of either the subject matter or the language. Also, the growth of immersion can be to the detriment of core programs, since the most fluent speakers tend to be assigned to immersion classes. If such a situation were to become generalized, it would create a totally unacceptable double standard for French education in Canada.

Here again, it is imperative that during their university years future French teachers, especially those for whom French is not the first language, be given the time and opportunity to improve their mastery of the language, either through formal education or through prolonged periods of time in a French-speaking environment. The latter would also provide cultural benefits. Regardless of their native language, however, teaching candidates should seek to improve not only their fluency and accuracy in standard oral and written French, but also their sensitivity to regional and social variations, their range of functional skills (administrative vs. scholarly vs. literary prose, for instance), their pronunciation, and even their handwriting. Since the teacher is for many students by far the

2 Stylistics is the study of, among other things, the characteristics of the different language registers or levels (colloquial, standard, formal...). Dialectology is the study of language variations across regions.

most important model of language use to which they will be exposed during their school years, it is crucial that this model present as adequate, faithful, and versatile an image of the French reality as possible. French, like any other language, has its colloquial as well as its literary varieties (with several levels in between) and its regional as well as its 'international' traits. A good French teacher should be able to navigate among these troubled waters, especially in view of the many prejudices surrounding the French language as it is used in Canada.

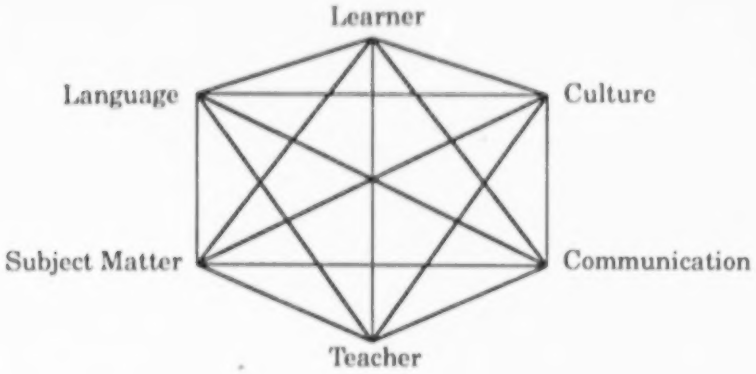
Finally, I would like to mention the need for standardized language proficiency examinations for future French teachers. There is currently much discrepancy in this area among universities and even within the same institution, according to whether the candidate is of French or other origin (Frisson-Rickson and Rebuffot 1986). Such a common measurement would not mean that candidates who do not perform satisfactorily would be automatically rejected, but at least a standard would be set and goals would be established for those who need to improve their mastery of the language.

5 Related disciplines

Just as medicine, as an applied discipline, draws much of its background knowledge from such fields as biology, chemistry, and anatomy, second-language teaching is intimately related to such fields as linguistics, psychology, sociology and, of course, education. Also, much of what we know about first-language and second-language learning, language functions, communication, and bilingualism is due to research carried out in recent years by psycholinguists and sociolinguists. It would thus be normal that second-language teachers have at least a basic knowledge of these disciplines and of their contribution to the field, just as it is expected of physicians that they have some knowledge of biology, chemistry, and anatomy.

The basic components of any second-language classroom situation are the following: the **learner**, the **teacher**, the target **language**, the target **culture**, the **communicative** goal and process, and, in the case of immersion, the **subject matter** being taught. Each of these components has characteristics and requirements that have to be respected if the whole process is to succeed. Each also has to be studied in relation to each of the others, as represented in the following chart:

Basic Components of an Immersion Class and their Interrelationships



Each component corresponds to the particular object of a discipline while the relationship between two or more components can be the object of such 'hybrid' disciplines as psycholinguistics, which studies the relationship between the learner and the language components, or sociolinguistics, which studies the set of relationships between language, society, culture, and communication. The field of second-language teaching (presented in component 6, below) studies the relationship between the teacher (and the teaching act) and each of the other components, in addition to attempting to integrate all of the components into a coherent model of second-language teaching and to developing programs, methods, and techniques for applying all these in the classroom.

The discipline which studies the conditions and requirements pertaining to the learner and the learning process is psychology. This is where the teacher candidate will learn about the characteristics of the child and the adolescent, about human learning in general, and about such variables affecting learning as age, motivation, aptitude, personality, and learning styles. In psycholinguistics, the candidate will learn more specifically about language learning and use and about such questions as the differences between first-language and second-language learning, the intricate relationships between consciously studying grammar rules and unconsciously using such rules in normal conversation, the important role of errors in language acquisition, and so forth.

The 'language' component is the domain of linguistics. Every second-language teacher should have a basic knowledge of the nature of human language as a code for communication and of how this code is organized in various interrelated subsystems representing the levels of sounds (phonetics and phonology), words (morphology), sentences (syntax), text (discourse), and meaning (semantics). Then, the teacher should learn how this system works in French, especially in spoken French (more neglected than its written counterpart in traditional formal education), and even how French generally compares to a language such as English, so that many of the learners' errors and difficulties can be anticipated, explained, and eventually corrected.

As for the cultural and communicative components (and their relationship to language within the social framework), they are shared by such disciplines as sociology, sociolinguistics, literature, and anthropology, but it is mostly within the field of second-language teaching itself that they are studied in the perspective best suited for the second-language teacher. Of course, it would be most advisable, and even essential in the case of literature for instance, that the future teacher acquire a certain background in these fields during his or her university education.

The last two components of the proposed model, the teacher and the subject matter, have already been briefly described above in the sections on general pedagogy and subject areas of specialization.

As mentioned earlier, knowing **how** to teach a subject cannot be divorced from the **subject** itself, **who** acquires it, for what **purpose**, and under what **conditions**. French as a second language is a multifaceted subject that simply cannot be identified with a fixed body of knowledge that the teacher acquires and then 'pours' into the students. It is a complex mix of notions, processes, and conditions, and this will have to be reflected in the teacher's preparation.

Of course, there are several levels at which such a model can be studied, and future teachers would not have to know all its intricacies. They should have at least a basic knowledge of its workings, however, especially as to how it can affect their teaching. This is how the teacher will be capable of creativity, critical thinking, and autonomy in the classroom instead of being a mere technician turning pages in a book or applying, often in an ad hoc fashion, a set of tricks and recipes. This is also how we will gradually bridge the enormous gap existing between theory and practice in this field.

The Field of Second-language Teaching

Theory	Introduction to second-language teaching
	Definition, conceptual framework, major issues, Canadian situation, the immersion phenomenon...
	History of second-language teaching
	Major approaches: grammar-translation, direct, audio-lingual, cognitive...
	Recent trends in second-language teaching
	The communicative (functional, experiential...) approach, comprehension-based methods...
	Conceptions of learning, teaching, language, culture, communication...
	Psycholinguistic principles behind the acquisition and use of each of the four skills
	Implications (and possible applications) of other disciplines' findings for second-language teaching
	Linguistic vs. psycholinguistic vs. sociolinguistic vs. pedagogical grammars...
	Review of research literature on French immersion
Programs	Types: core, immersion, intensive, extended...
	Early, middle, late; partial, total...
	Levels: elementary, secondary, postsecondary
	Official documents, guidelines, regulations...
	Syllabus design for each type, level of program (criteria for selection, sequencing...):
	Language syllabus
	Culture syllabus
	Communicative syllabus
	General language education syllabus
	Syllabus for each subject area (social sciences, mathematics...)
	Special education programs
	Language across the curriculum (subject integration)
	Program evaluation
Instructional materials	Knowledge of available material and resources
	Material selection, development, adaptation, evaluation, and use
	French and other subjects

Types, organization of language-teaching textbooks

Material designed for Francophones vs. immersion vs. core students

Integrated material (language across the curriculum)

Learning centres, themes...

Teaching aids, media

Audio-visual material (radio, TV, VCR, music, films...), computer programs, newspapers, magazines, games (Trivial Pursuit in French, Monopoly...)

Occasions and programs for visits, exchanges with native speakers

Procedures

Characteristics of French immersion teaching:

First-language learning vs. immersion vs. core

The initial phase: comprehension, emergence of speech...

Teacher's input and reaction to students' output (teacher talk, tolerance for errors, for English...)

Reconciling subject matter and language requirements

The four skills:

Skill acquiring vs. skill using

Methodology for presenting, practicing, reviewing, and evaluating each skill, culture

Skills, subject integration

Teaching culture

Lesson planning

Guided discovery, use of grammatical explanations...

Grouping, teamwork, interaction

Personalizing, individualizing teaching (according to needs, abilities), 'humanistic' techniques for developing a positive image, using talents, lowering anxiety...

Using games, role play, simulation, authentic French material

Use of French inside and outside the classroom

Art of questioning

Discipline

Error correction

Evaluation of students, teaching, and material

Student self-evaluation

Dealing with special students

Relating to parents, school authorities, other teachers...

Policy making, administrative and environmental conditions (at the provincial, board, and school levels)	General policies and guidelines
	Criteria and procedures for teacher education (including teaching practice), selection, supervision, evaluation
	Criteria and procedures for the creation of immersion centres, and classes...
	Criteria and procedures for student selection and evaluation
	Integrating the Francophone teacher in the Anglophone teaching milieu
	Special education
	Resources (budgets...)

6 Second-language teaching

The field of second-language teaching has developed into one of the most dynamic areas of education. It is based on an enormous body of literature, and the number of colloquia, conferences, symposia, and meetings – organized each year by the different associations of researchers, teachers, parents, and administrators – is ample proof of the interest it generates. French immersion, for its part, is probably the most closely followed and researched experiment in the history of education. Given these facts and given what has so far been discussed in this article, it will be obvious that immersion teacher education cannot, as it often does, simply count on a general teaching certificate, some proficiency in the language, and in some but not all cases, one or two special methodology courses. I would even venture to say that teacher preparation (not only for immersion) is the weakest link of the educational chain, and we are overdue in catching up with the times and giving our future professionals the kind of specialized education they deserve.

The areas of second-language teaching with which prospective teachers should be familiar are outlined in the table above (see also Calvé 1983, 1988b; Frisson-Rickson and Rebuffot 1986; and Richards and Rodgers 1986). Here again, the degree to which every aspect will be developed will depend largely on the time made available for teacher preparation, but a mastery of as broad a range of topics as possible should be attained by the teachers during their undergraduate degree studies, leaving it to professional development and/or graduate courses to further develop their expertise in each area.

Such expertise, which would include a well balanced mix of knowledge and know-how, would be acquired progressively through study, systematic observation, and practice, including experimentation and experience. It is extremely important, however, that the theoretical as well as the practical foundations of the profession be given **prior** to certification. Otherwise, as a nationwide study on French immersion has well demonstrated (Wilton et al. 1984, Roy 1984), practicing teachers who have not had this kind of balanced preparation during their training program are rarely interested, during inservice courses or conference workshops, in going beyond immediately usable sets of materials and procedures.

To these learned competencies, we must add those qualities which are either innate or acquired only through experience. They reflect more closely what is often called 'the art of teaching': love for the job and the students, communicative ability, sense of humour, patience, fairness, creativity, and so forth.

Conclusion

It is not likely, with the growing demand for French immersion teachers and the current formula used for most teacher certification programs, that we will be able to give every prospective French second-language teacher such an 'ideal' preparation in the near future. But, it is important to set standards and establish goals for future development. This has been the main purpose of this article.

Immersion is probably the most successful experience in the history of formal bilingual education, at least in North America. This success is due to the dedication, knowledge, and talents of all those parents, teachers, students, and researchers involved in its implementation and application. Much has been learned during those pioneering years, not only about immersion but concerning the whole field of second-language education in general, and it would seem only normal that future generations of teachers should benefit as much as possible from this accumulated body of knowledge and experience.

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Beyond the Classroom in Rural Saskatchewan

Laura Van Loon and Marjorie Scharf

Since the 1970s parents have been increasingly interested in enrolling their children in French second-language school programs. In Saskatchewan this has resulted in a number of initiatives in supportive and innovative curricular and co-curricular[1] French activities (Lemoine and Tougas 1985). One prominent source of such initiatives has been the eager groups of parents at the local, provincial, and national levels of Canadian Parents for French (CPF), which has helped revolutionize educational expectations for second-language learning through the vision of 'providing educational opportunities for young Canadians to learn and use the French language.'[2] French immersion parents have been outstanding in supporting teachers and principals through their commitment to the program and in their provision of extra resources and activities where necessary. Parental involvement has also been shown to influence a child's success in school (Henderson 1988).

In Saskatchewan, enlightened legislation provides for two types of schools designed to meet the varying French language needs of its French-speaking as well as its English-speaking populations. The *fransaskois* school fosters French culture and customs within a program that offers all subjects in French except English language arts. It is designed for Francophone students, as defined in Section 23 of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms. The French immersion program provides instruction for English-speaking

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1 Co-curricular activities are activities supportive of the regular school curriculum.

2 Mission statement, adopted by Canadian Parents for French at the Twelfth Annual General Meeting, October 12, 1988.

students, to enable them to become functional in French as a second language.

Under *The Education Act*, any child in Saskatchewan has access to a French immersion program if the parents request it. However, for the program to be made available in the home jurisdiction, parents or guardians representing at least fifteen students must have made a formal submission to the board of education. According to Saskatchewan legislation, if fewer than fifteen students are registered, the local school board must subsidize student tuition, room

and board, and/or transportation to the closest community offering a French immersion program. In some rural communities, the local school boards elect to offer a core French alternative. The popularity of core French over French immersion in the rural areas is due mainly to the small populations and the fear that if a French immersion program is put in place the local school may be closed or local teachers may be displaced. Therefore, educators in rural areas are advocating improved core French programs with outside activities during the summer months and after regular school hours.

Since its incorporation in 1977, CPF-Saskatchewan has concentrated on providing services for English-speaking students interested in acquiring French as a second, or possibly third, language. We know that parents must make informed choices about available opportunities. To assist enquiring parents, CPF-Saskatchewan has established an information package which includes CPF pamphlets and research data. A CPF member invited to attend a parents' meeting might show the CPF-Saskatchewan video production 'The French Immersion Experience' and follow this up with discussion or a strategy session concerning implementing a program in the community. Interest in some areas of the province has also led parents to consider establishing French preschools to attract the student numbers necessary for petitioning the local school board for immersion classes.

Parents with young children studying French, or high school students seeking co-curricular activities in a French milieu, have become interested in other services, as shown in the CPF-Saskatchewan award-winning film 'Growing Up Bilingual.' The residential camp experiences depicted in the film have been designed to meet the special needs of ten to sixteen-year-olds in core French and French immersion programs (CPF-Saskatchewan Summer Camp Report 1988).

Another service is the innovative day camp program that CPF-Saskatchewan has sponsored for young children since 1983, the French Summer Touring Program (CPF-Saskatchewan French Summer Touring Program Manual). Parents believe that primary school students need review and reinforcement of their French skills during the summer vacation months in a fun-filled and participatory setting in their home towns. Young children, it is felt, would be better motivated in a relaxed day camp atmosphere, reviewing and enlarging their basic French vocabulary with their

peers. To stimulate social interaction among the day campers, emphasis is placed on verbal communication skills, cooperative games, and hands-on activities. Parents also try to expose the students to an enriched French cultural experience through appropriate songs, films, and dance.

CPF chapter development has increased as parents have become more informed about program options and more aware of support services available through CPF networking. For example, so that potential students and undecided parents could feel more comfortable about enrolling in a French immersion program, pre-kindergarten children have been enrolled in the Touring Program as a 'trial run,' and the parents have become members of the local CPF chapter.

CPF-Saskatchewan has volunteer coordinators at the provincial and chapter levels responsible for carrying out all activities necessary for a well run camping experience. The provincial board assumes responsibility for obtaining insurance, keeping an inventory of all available supplies and library materials, and assisting in financial matters. The provincial coordinator, with the assistance of bilingual committee members, hires and trains the fluently bilingual university students who staff the camp.

A team of two monitors initiated the Touring Program in 1983. However, it quickly expanded to two teams of two monitors, visiting a maximum of fourteen chapters each summer. The teams travel throughout the province to the chapters. The program has enabled many monitors to broaden their knowledge about Saskatchewan and establish friendships with its people. Chapter members play a big role, for they must advertise, register students, obtain facilities, collect fees, billet monitors, be 'on call' during program times, and communicate with the provincial coordinator. They also have the responsibility of dividing their sessions between immersion and non-immersion students, and providing different sessions for different age groups.

The evolution of the Touring Program has been interesting. The provincial board has made the program available to all rural and urban CPF chapters in Saskatchewan. Whether their school board opts for French second-language programs or not, each participating chapter has helped to improve program delivery. This cooperative effort has allowed parents in small chapters access to a service they would not otherwise have. The program has raised the profiles

of the local CPF organizations and has assisted in chapter development by promoting cooperative efforts between schools and parents. The use of school facilities to host the camp fosters supportive attitudes between parents and staff. The program has provided new and acceptable French-speaking role models for the children to imitate as they listen, sing, and talk in their sessions. This learning situation is particularly valuable for students, regardless of their age, where there is no direct access to a French community (Massey 1986), or when parents feel reluctant to participate in the French community's life because of their own lack of understanding of the language. Approximately fifteen hundred children were enrolled in the first seven years of the French Summer Touring Program.

Do young students advancing to Grades 7 and 8, where they are selecting high school options, continue in French second-language programs? Saskatchewan CPF members have been concerned about the drop-off rate between elementary and secondary schools in the French immersion programs. Observing attrition statistics in other provinces and listening to students' reasons for registering in English high school programs (Duhamel 1985) suggest a need for CPF to inform, encourage, and motivate students to enhance their French skills by enrolling in French high school programs in which 50 percent or more of their courses are in French. A secondary school program which offers this many courses in French will ultimately enable students to function comfortably in French or English in their personal and work worlds.

So, how have a handful of volunteer parents attempted to make a difference? In 1986, the CPF-Saskatchewan executive developed the idea of 'reaching out' to students in Grades 7 and 8 through a youth conference where they could experience 'Living French' outside their school walls (Van Loon 1987). An essential requirement was to bring a lifestyle, a culture, to these students so they might bridge the gap between their classroom experiences and the reality of French Canadians and their culture. Planners were aware that research has shown that developing positive attitudes towards the language being studied, through frequent interaction with members of the Francophone community, has a positive effect on student learning (Porebski and McInnis 1988). They reasoned that more occasions needed to be made available for students to use French in a participatory atmosphere where talk, not chalk, is the order of

the day. They argued that as the comfort level of using French increases students are more likely to continue the program at the secondary and postsecondary levels (McGillivray 1985). They thought that a variety of hands-on activities and cultural workshops presented in a conference format by members of the Francophone working community would make students more aware of their personal degree of fluency and knowledge. They concluded that a week-end *Rendez-vous*, where members of both official language groups could participate in a non-academic French milieu, might be a starting point for new friendships, new career options, and a broader understanding of what it means to be a bilingual Canadian citizen.

By busing one hundred students to the Bilingual Studies Centre at the University of Regina from designated schools throughout the province, CPF-Saskatchewan has brought together bilingual university monitors, members of the Francophone workforce, French-speaking teachers, CPF parent volunteers, and students from both official language groups to create a French Village for a week-end of fun and communication in French in western Canada. It is hard to know what the long-term effects of such an experience will be for the students; however, the *joie de vivre* expressed in testimonials and evaluations surely indicates that we're providing an important service for our teenagers.

CPF-Saskatchewan has continued to organize such *Rendez-vous* week-ends. The success of this 'Made-in-Saskatchewan' idea can be gauged by spin-offs in some of our schools and in other provinces. The CPF national organization has established its successful *Rendez-vous Canada* series on the Saskatchewan model.

The phenomenal growth of French immersion and core French programs has clearly reflected new parental expectations. Parents hold the principle that Canada should be a bilingual nation (Nagy and Klaiman 1988), the belief that their children will benefit economically from bilingualism, and the hope that they will develop an appreciation for French-Canadian culture (Bienvenue 1986). Parents in Saskatchewan have realized the significant role they must play in providing opportunities for their children to encounter the world of French-Canadian culture and language outside classroom boundaries, and they have demonstrated that using French beyond the classroom does provide students with a more effective and enjoyable learning experience.

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In the Footsteps of Demosthenes en français: le Festival national d'art oratoire

Hildi Konok

Every spring from late February to the end of March, thousands of students of all ages, from every province and territory, are busily preparing their speeches for the annual *Concours d'art oratoire* sponsored by Canadian Parents for French (CPF). *Concours* is fast becoming a spring ritual in French classrooms from coast to coast as more and more students and teachers become involved in this event. In many places, participation in *Concours* is even being integrated into French second-language programming.

Student and school board participation increases in each province virtually every year. In 1989, close to 54,000 students and 152 school boards were involved at various levels of the *Concours d'art oratoire* organized by CPF.

History of *Festival*

Even Professor André Obadia of Simon Fraser University, who initiated the idea of an oratorical competition to hone the French language skills of students, could not have foreseen the tremendous support for his original concept from all quarters. In 1983, he organized the first speaking contest for French immersion students in British Columbia under the title of *Concours d'art oratoire organis sous l'égide de Contact* (CAOOSEC). The enthusiastic response resulted in CAOOSEC being expanded into a national contest for both immersion and Francophone students in 1984.

Provincial competitions were held in the six participating provinces and one territory and the winners from each category above Grade 6 were invited to a non-competitive oratorical *Festival* in Ottawa. The event, with its twenty-seven immersion and Francophone participants, was sponsored by the French language teachers' magazine, *Contact*. All who attended were favourably impressed by the speeches and, in particular, by the relaxed and

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easy interaction among members of the French first-language and French second-language groups.

CPF's Involvement

The success of the national CAOOSEC strengthened Dr. Obadia's belief in the inherent value of such an event, making him more determined than ever to enhance its national spirit. In his mind, the logical successor to develop the activity along these lines was Canadian Parents for French. Not only is CPF dedicated to the promotion of French language learning opportunities, but also it possesses the networking essential for providing the truly national scope such a project requires.

Since 1985, Canadian Parents for French has been hosting the *Festival national d'art oratoire* and, in conjunction with its chapters and provincial branches, has been successfully organizing the *Concours d'art oratoire* and its 'speak-offs' at various levels across the country. The CPF National Board turned to the Secretary of State for financial assistance. That department agreed to help fund *Festival* and has generously been continuing to do so since CPF became involved.

Purpose

For Canadian Parents for French, the objectives of the *Concours d'art oratoire*, which culminates in the non-competitive *Festival*, are twofold: to stimulate the interest of English-speaking core and immersion students in the learning of French and to reinforce the motivation of Francophones in learning their mother tongue. To accomplish the second end, each province is funded to send a minimum of one Francophone to *Festival*, thus ensuring representation from that sector.

An Organizational Challenge

To orchestrate such a mammoth undertaking, involving all levels of CPF, it has been necessary to contract the services of a *Festival* coordinator whose task is not only to organize the four-day event but to provide the framework for coordinating the competitions at the provincial and local *Concours* levels. Alan Roberts, incidentally a former late immersion student of André Obadia, has been doing

an exemplary job since 1985, using his managerial skills to consolidate the various levels of *Concours* and to help make *Festival* the huge success it has been from its inception. In addition, he is able to establish an instant and easy rapport with the students, injecting *Festival* with an informal, fun-filled flavour.

In early September of each year, the *Festival* coordinator mails a detailed information and 'how to' package to each provincial *Concours* coordinator. This ensures a degree of consistency across the country in establishing objectives, rules, and guidelines for eligibility and organization.

The provincial *Concours* coordinator, in turn, provides all school boards and local CPF chapters with the information and assistance necessary to organize the speak-offs at the classroom and district levels. The winners are determined by early March; subsequently each school board is allowed to send up to two winners per category to the provincial contest scheduled shortly thereafter.

Five winners from each province and one from each territory, representing the various categories from Grades 9 to 12, are then invited to Ottawa to present their speeches at the non-competitive

Festival national d'art oratoire usually held in early June. A chaperone selected by CPF accompanies the five students to *Festival* for the four-day celebration, which includes the presentation of speeches and a week-end of busy activities conducted in French.

Rules and Regulations of *Concours*

Students are usually placed in four categories (early immersion, late immersion, core French, and Francophone) on the basis of their linguistic backgrounds and school experience. Should difficulties arise regarding the appropriate placement of a student, the final decision for subdividing categories and determining the eligibility of students is the responsibility of the provincial organizers. Three carefully selected judges are invited to choose the winners in each category according to a strictly defined set of criteria established by Canadian Parents for French. Naturally, teachers and students have been informed in advance of the rules and the nature of the evaluation process.

In addition to giving a speech of a predetermined length (two to four minutes for Grades 1 to 6, three to five minutes for Grades 7 to 12), the students are asked questions about their respective presentations to determine their level of comprehension and ability to communicate spontaneously in French. In some provinces the judges pose the questions; in other places teachers have been added to the panel since they are most familiar with the linguistic competency of the students in the different categories and are thus able to ask questions that are appropriate and fair.

The W. Russ McGillivray Award

The W. Russ McGillivray award is given in each province to the winner of the most senior immersion category. This award, established by Canadian Parents for French to honour the memory of an outstanding and dedicated French language educator, includes a certificate, a brief biography of Mr. McGillivray, and a fifty dollar cheque.

Festival Theme

Each year a theme is built into *Festival*. In the first year it was 'Why learn a second language?' In 1987, to reflect the upcoming international Francophone summit in Quebec City, the theme was 'What is Canada's role in the Francophone global community?'

To highlight the theme, the students, led by a guest animator, have a round-table discussion on the subject. This encourages them to express their ideas in an informal and spontaneous fashion in French. Once the discussion has peaked, the students break into groups to prepare and present short skits promoting the theme.

This approach seems to unleash their creative talents and gives vent to their boundless energy and enthusiasm. It further encourages them to use French in a personal, highly communicative way. I often find this to be one of the most enjoyable and entertaining activities during *Festival*.

To stimulate the discussion, great efforts are made to choose an interesting guest animator. In the past, there have been political figures like Maureen McTeer, Liberal party whip Jean-Robert Gauthier, and most recently, the Honourable Joe Ghiz, Premier of Prince Edward Island, who enjoyed a lively, stimulating exchange with the students on Confederation and its modern implications for the smallest province in Canada.

Festival 1989 in Charlottetown

Festival, usually held in Ottawa, enables the students to familiarize themselves with the nation's capital. They tour the Parliament Buildings, attend Question Period, cruise the Ottawa River, and are given ample opportunity to use their language skills in an authentically bilingual setting.

As a departure in 1989, Canadian Parents for French moved *Festival* to Charlottetown, Prince Edward Island, to celebrate the 125th anniversary of the Charlottetown Conference, the historic meeting of our Fathers of Confederation, who gathered together to ponder the future of what we now know as Canada. CPF decided that having *Festival* in Charlottetown would offer the participants a unique opportunity to step into Canada's past.

There they met with Premier Joe Ghiz, who shared with them his views on the nature and meaning of Confederation today. This encounter motivated the students to explore further their personal

ideas and visions of Canada and its future in the round-table discussions which followed. These were very fruitful and, upon completion, the students prepared forceful statements in the form of skits, songs, and humorous sketches, which they presented on the steps of Province House to passers-by in downtown Charlottetown.

Presentation of Speeches

The high point of every *Festival* week-end is, of course, the non-competitive presentation of the winning speeches. Ordinarily, the prospect of spending an entire day listening to speeches would tax anyone's endurance, but I can assure you that this part of *Festival* is anything but boring. With the exception of a time limit of three to five minutes per speech, the students have unlimited choice and flexibility. They can speak on any topic, using any legitimate oratorical approach. The result is a refreshing array of topics and styles of presentation such as the following: the impassioned plea for understanding by a young Montrealer fearful of the future of a French Quebec as expressed in *La survie du français au Québec*; the hilarious self-parody of a teenager in love in *Les relations amoureuses*; the intensely dramatic *La crevasse de Lucifer*; the movingly poetic description of Cape Breton in *Le berceau de la Nouvelle-Ecosse*; and the very private reflections in *Avoir des parents divorcés*. These examples indicate the wide range of subjects at the listener's disposal.

Educational Benefits

Those who have been attending *Festival* over the years have remarked at the ease with which Francophones and non-Francophones interact and have noted the increasingly high quality of linguistic expression in the speeches. An interesting change over the years has been that the students opt more and more for personal and subjective themes, and there are a greater number of humorous presentations as well. In the early years, the speeches were more formal and factual. The change in approach seems to indicate that students today feel more comfortable in the French language. As the language becomes more internalized, they feel more confident in expressing their own ideas. The emphasis over

the years has shifted from a concentration on the language to the message the students wish to communicate. The result is less self-consciousness on the part of the speaker and a more interesting result for the listener.

The immediate educational benefits of public speaking in any language are numerous. The students learn to research, organize, and memorize a speech which they then must present to a variety of listening audiences. French language educators especially value the fact that public speaking in a second language makes use of the four principal components needed to develop a student's language skills: reading, writing, listening, and speaking. All this takes place in a relatively natural fashion. The focus is on the communication of ideas, not on the language itself, an approach that more readily lends itself to the acquisition of a second language. Since the non-intimidating atmosphere of *Festival* is one of fun and camaraderie, and since students therefore feel at ease, they are better able to absorb new language skills.

In addition, since students of varying linguistic backgrounds intermingle and non-Francophones have access to a large number of native Francophone speakers, everyone benefits from the real-life language experience. It is no wonder that many schools across the country have incorporated *Concours* into their regular curricula.

Far-reaching Benefits

Other benefits, perhaps less obvious, are equally important. The popularity of the CPF-organized *Concours d'art oratoire* has inspired several provincial Francophone organizations, such as *la Commission Culturelle Fransaskoise* and *la Fédération des parents acadiens de la Nouvelle-Ecosse*, to follow suit with their own highly successful public speaking contests.

Both the Commissioner of Official Languages and the government of France recognize that an event like *Festival* is a wonderful vehicle for the promotion of the French language and culture. In his 1988 Annual Report, the Commissioner of Official Languages, D'Iberville Fortier, states that 'one of the most tireless and imaginative providers of extra-curricular French activities is Canadian Parents for French whose popular annual French *Festival* involves more and more students every year.' (Part V, 246)

For its part, since 1985 the French Embassy has offered a trip to France to one of the Grade 11 or 12 participants, the lucky student being selected by a draw at the end of *Festival*. The winner spends two weeks in that country either visiting with a French family, going to school, or sight-seeing with a group of students.

Festival has become more than a language learning opportunity. It is a unique way of bringing together the diverse regional elements within our country so obviously reflected by the young participants of *Festival*, who comprise many races, social classes, religions, and ethnic groups. After only four days together in Ottawa, unified by their friendship and communication in French, they leave with an enriched perception of what it means to be a Canadian. The Francophone from Trois Rivières learns that a rich, viable French culture and language does indeed exist outside Quebec. The Anglophone from Edson, Alberta, comes to appreciate the special needs of the Acadian in Chéticamp, Nova Scotia, struggling daily against assimilation. Each student returns home with a clearer vision of the realities to be found in Canada and with a deeper understanding of what is needed if we are ever to bridge the gap of the 'two solitudes.'

These young people may become true ambassadors of Canada's linguistic duality in their own communities. They can promote the two official languages in an effective and meaningful way in their everyday lives. Canadian Parents for French believes that *Festival* is one of the most important activities under its sponsorship, not only because it has significant educational benefits, but also because it provides a unique and invaluable citizenship experience to all who participate.

Were he alive today, the great Greek orator, Demosthenes, would be proud to see the freshness and renewed vigour infused into the ancient art of oratory by the participants in *Festival*. Seeing and hearing these youngsters is living proof that the art of oratory, far from being in its death throes, is alive and indeed flourishing. Surely that, in itself, is cause for celebration and should provide us all with a strong incentive to continue supporting *Festival*.

Sorry - you want the Constant Partying Foundation. They're down the hall.
C.P.F.
CANADIAN PARENTS FOR FRENCH
C.P.F.
WHEEE
BOOTHROYD

Canadian Parents for French

Kathryn Manzer

A directory of national organizations could describe Canadian Parents for French in the following few words:

Canadian Parents for French (CPF) – Non-profit organization. Founded: 1977. Membership: 18,000. Local organization: 200 chapters. Object of the Corporation: To provide educational opportunities for young Canadians to learn and use the French language.

These words describe CPF accurately, but far from completely. Two major elements are missing. The first is a sense of the dedication and creative energy that fuel Canadian Parents for French and have led to its rapid growth. The second is acknowledgement of the organization's many notable achievements in the thirteen years since its founding conference. The strength of CPF is in its members and their commitment to the organization's objectives.

A valued minority of CPF members are educators, school trustees, politicians, Francophones, grandparents, and students, all of whom have joined the organization in order to show support for its goals. However, most members of CPF are parents whose first language is not French. The children and young people whose interests these parents represent are from every province and territory in Canada, from widely diverse socio-economic and ethnic backgrounds, from all levels of school (including post-secondary institutions), and from all descriptions of French second-language programs (core/basic, extended, and immersion French). What CPF parents do have in common is the conviction that their children's education should include meaningful opportunities to learn French.

CPF Advocacy

CPF members work at the local, provincial/territorial, and national levels to promote and support excellence in French programming and instruction in Canadian schools. At the local level, this involves working with school boards to ensure that the variety of programs

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and the number of places in those programs are appropriate to the existing demand in the community. Parents also serve on board and school committees and assist schools and teachers in financing and planning special events, performances, and excursions in French. At the provincial level, CPF is in close touch with ministries and departments of education. It is at this level of government that policy, curricula, funding, and teacher certification requirements are determined and that stable, sequential, and well-taught French second-language (FSL) programs have their roots. CPF's national organization monitors research and developments in FSL and maintains liaison with the Office of the Commissioner of Official Languages and with the national organizations of teachers, school trustees, and others involved in setting FSL policy and implementing programs. Nationally, CPF also reviews federal government initiatives that affect the climate for French second-language programs and takes advantage of opportunities to submit the organization's position on these proposals. The revision of the Official Languages Act is an example of CPF involvement of this kind. Over the years, CPF has worked with officials of the federal Secretary of State Department on many projects and has appreciated the Department's financial support.

CPF Activities for Children

CPF has worked to supplement and enrich school French programs since the organization was formed, and it is difficult to overstate the importance of these initiatives. At the local level, activities have included book sales that introduce parents to new French books and records for their children and, at the same time, raise money for French library acquisitions. CPF parents also organize library story hours in French, trips in French, and a myriad of French language special events – carnivals, picnics, skating parties, concerts, festivals, and performances – that bring parents, teachers, and children together.

As CPF has grown, so too has its commitment to out-of-school activities in French. Summer camps have become a major part of the CPF agenda and have sprung up in a diversity of formats in almost every province and territory; for example, there are family camps in British Columbia, a touring camp in Saskatchewan, and a winter camp in the Northwest Territories. Camps can be a few days

or a month long, day camps or residential camps, for children just beginning school or for high school students, for immersion students or for children with little or no French. Whatever their characteristics, the common goal of CPF camps is to improve children's fluency and confidence in French through activities – and fun!

In 1985, CPF sponsored *le Festival national d'art oratoire* for the first time. *Festival* is the culmination of months of 'speak-offs' in French in classrooms, schools, regions, and provincial/territorial centres across Canada. The winners of the provincial finals who are brought together, usually in Ottawa, for an all-in-French week-end of speech-making, tours, and festivities, represent over fifty thousand young people who have participated in the contest at earlier stages.

An innovative Saskatchewan pilot project became the model for CPF's *Rendez-vous Canada* program which began in 1988 and has been funded by the CRB Foundation. In each of the participating provinces, *Rendez-vous* brings together one hundred French immersion and Francophone students in Grades 7, 8, and 9 for an activity-packed week-end conference in French. The young people from both language backgrounds learn, for example, song writing, pottery making, cake decorating, radio programming, and wood carving. Even more important, they learn that they can do these things together – in French.

All of these things – local activities, camps, public speaking, *Rendez-vous* week-ends – not only provide children with an opportunity to improve their fluency in French but illustrate to them the difference that a second language can make in their lives. What better way is there to encourage children and young people to continue to learn French than to enable them to share fun and activities with new French-speaking friends?

CPF as a Resource

CPF acts as a resource for parents and others through personal contact, through public relations, and through its publications. As human resources, CPF members are available as workshop leaders, as speakers at meetings and conferences, and as sympathetic and informed 'ears' over the telephone. CPF's work in public relations has included two national public awareness campaigns that featured multi-media information, colourful bus cards and posters

across the country, and special events at the community level. In 1984, in an attempt to gather and share information of a different sort, CPF commissioned a national poll to determine the level of support for French second-language education. Among the interesting and encouraging findings of that poll was the fact that two of every three Canadians wanted their children to learn French in school in order to become bilingual.

CPF's publications have been both a priority and a source of pride for the organization since its founding. The CPF National Newsletter, published four times a year, is more than just an attempt to bring members up to date on the affairs of the organization; it is a reliable and valuable source of information on new research and programs and on books and other resources for both children and their parents. CPF also publishes a range of pamphlets designed to provide specific information for particular interests. Pamphlets describing individual programs (core French, early immersion, and others) have been particularly popular and CPF's first pamphlet, *How To Be An Immersion Parent*, is still a treasured aid to many 'beginning' immersion parents. The *Registry of French Immersion Programs* was another CPF publishing triumph. In 1979, the typewritten Immersion Registry, with its listing of types of programs available in communities and specific schools, was held by a relatively small group of CPFers who shared its information with families who were moving and wanted to begin or continue their children's French immersion education. More than ten years later, it serves the same purpose, but now it has become an annually published resource for all CPF Chapters and is purchased by school boards, ministries and departments of education, and research institutes across Canada.

CPF's first major publication, *So You Want Your Child to Learn French!*, was conceived as a practical guide for parents of children learning French. Its warm reception – it was a national best seller! – led to the publication in 1985 of *More French, s'il vous plaît!*, a book that responded to parental demand for **more** French for children and **more** information about French programs and supplementary activities at all levels. The success of the 1979 handbook led to a decision to publish a second edition of *So You Want Your Child to Learn French!* which we hope will be as useful to parents in the 1990s as the first edition was to parents a decade earlier.

An honest look at the important questions facing all parents who want to make the best decisions regarding their child's education.

Roseann Runte, Principal, Glendon College, York University

Congratulations are extended to CPF for a handbook that is a treasure of practical and factual information for parents who have or soon will have children in FSL programs. It is also a very useful document for teachers and school administrators who desire to keep abreast of the latest issues in FSL education as well as the difficulties the French culture faces in order to survive outside of Quebec. Well done CPF!

Spencer M. Stanutz, Principal, Glen Ogilvie Public School, Gloucester, Ontario

Having three kids in the programs of two provinces myself, I know the questions and uncertainties parents have not only about immersion but about the core programs as well. Having a series of well researched and very readable articles is exactly what's needed to promote understanding and allay fears.

John Nowlan, Executive Producer, Children's Television, CBC

It is great to know that with a country we inherit a culture. This book helps us to discover that we Canadians get it in duplicate.

Antonine Maillet, Acadian Author and Playwright